

3 ways the Kawartha Lakes community is supporting seniors during COVID-19

Sarah Sobanski

Isolating during the COVID-19 pandemic is especially difficult for seniors who are at a higher risk for the virus. They may be living in locked-down long-term care facilities or be living alone, unable to see their families and friends.

The Kawartha Lakes community is taking special care when it comes to supporting seniors through the pandemic:

1.

With some services closed / cut back, the Kawartha Lakes Police Service and [@RossMemorial](#) have been checking in with seniors and other vulnerable people in our community to ensure they have food and to educate about protecting themselves from COVID-19. As a community, we will get through this crisis. pic.twitter.com/1D3PSfSkRT

— KawarthaLakes Police (@klpsmedia) [March 29, 2020](#)

For several years, Sgt. Dave Murtha and nurse Sheila Carron have been heading out to check in with seniors and vulnerable residents as a part of a community response program between Kawartha Lakes Police Service and Ross Memorial Hospital.

Lately, that program has extended to include making sure residents have enough to eat and the latest information on COVID-19, health and safety.

Murtha says he and Carron started discussing how the pandemic could be affecting vulnerable groups when it started.

“We wanted to make sure they weren’t being taken advantage of,” he says, noting COVID-19 scams and misinformation.

Murtha says they stick to phone calls where possible, connecting residents with valuable resources in the community, but they have been out to deliver food in emergency situations. He gives a shout out to Kawartha Lakes Food Source and the Salvation Army food bank.

Today Im out in [@kawarthalakes](#) with mental health nurse Carron from [@RossMemorial](#) . We’re here to help people in crisis. But much of our current work includes making sure seniors and other vulnerable people have basic necessities and are prepared for the COVID-19 crisis pic.twitter.com/pSoGArDnEj

— KawarthaLakes Police (@klpsmedia) [April 7, 2020](#)

Murtha says the response to the program has been positive and made a “tremendous

impact” for a few individuals.

“We’re certainly trying to protect the most vulnerable,” Murtha says. “If someone has a concern about someone in the community they can always reach out to the police service... We’ll always respond to concerns from the public about a person's wellbeing.”

2.

Some residents such as local Mike Perry are stopping by seniors’ windows to wave and say hello.

Perry “visited” his mom, Mary Perry, at Caressant Care Lindsay by stopping outside her window.

“Her eyes lit up, she knows what’s going on in terms of the pandemic and the isolation requirements. And I took her grandchildren and held them up too. Her eyes just sparkle. Big smile,” he says.

Perry saw children and grandchildren posting photos of their elder loved ones from safe distances — through windows or from the parking lot — on Facebook. He says the Perrys are used to visiting several times a week and it’s been hard not being about to visit because of the pandemic.

“It’s been hard on a personal level but also as a caregiver helping her get the things that she needs done accomplished,” he says. “A lot of the times you’re their link to the community and making sure their affairs get done.”

When Perry visited his mom he says he called her on the phone so they could chat as well. He notes that he only stops-by now when he has to go out for essential errands as the province and city are urging people to stay home.

“It’s not just she and I that are going through this, a lot of people are having even harder challenges. Our hearts goes out to those in Bobcaygeon,” he says.

Perry says he was worried that social distancing was going to hurt our sense of community, but he’s found it’s giving us a better appreciation for each other instead.

“I hope we come out of this and keep that aspect of appreciation for each other and that we need a sense of belonging and connection to others.”

Perry sent his gratitude to Caressant Care Lindsay for their work during the pandemic.

3.



Staff at long-term care facilities such as Victoria Manor are helping staff connect with loved-ones via video chat.

According to a City of Kawartha Lakes release, residents of the manor can book online video chats working with the life enrichment team through Facebook Messenger and FaceTime.

“During these challenging times, the most important thing we can do is keep our residents calm and safe. By accessing technologies to help keep families in touch, we are doing our part to eliminate the feeling of loneliness that social distancing can create,” Jessica Woolridge, life enrichment officer for the manor said in the release.

“Seeing the faces of our residents light up when their grand kids pop up on the screen is one of the bonuses of setting up these platforms,” she added. “We’re all going through this hardship together so putting smiles on the faces of those we’re caring for helps make everyone’s day a little easier.”