

LIAISON

December 2020

5 ways to share virtual cheer for the holidays



In the new world of physical distancing, we are using more technology to stay connected with each other. This holiday season will be challenging for those who look forward to large family dinners and get-togethers with friends. However, you can still share the holiday cheer with loved ones outside of your household, if you have a smartphone or device with video-chat capabilities. Here are few ideas to get you in the virtual-festive spirit:

Host a virtual family dinner. Invite your family to log in to [Skype](#) at dinner time for a video call, set your device on the table and enjoy a meal together (while apart).

Join a movie watch party. Use [Teleparty](#) to watch your favourite holiday movies with your grandkids or friends at the same time.

Dress your pet for a virtual party. Pets are fun, but pets in festive costumes are even better. Invite a few friends with pets to join a [Zoom](#) video call for the party. Best costume wins bragging rights!

Sing karaoke. Log in to [Google Meet](#) with your friends, download the karaoke app ([Yokee](#)), select your favourite holiday songs and sing the night away.

Bakers unite. Share your favourite holiday recipe with friends, gather the ingredients then jump on a [WhatsApp](#) video call. It's almost as good as baking in the same kitchen together.

Holiday celebrations may be a bit different this year, but they can still be fun and festive.

Grieving differently during a pandemic



If you have experienced the loss a loved one during the pandemic, there are a few steps you can take to help you grieve:

Stay connected. Invite people to call you or set up conference calls or virtual conferences with family and friends to stay in touch. Share stories and photos by post, email, phone, video chat or through apps or social media.

Reinvent mourning rituals and practices. We need mourning rituals and practices that are respectful, consistent with the faith or culture of families, to mark the departure of the loved one during pandemics. Why not create a virtual memory book, blog or web page so that family and friends can honour the memory of your loved one, share memories. Prepare your loved one's favorite meal or any other concrete gesture that had significance and can remind you of them.

Ask for help. Getting help is essential if you or a loved one is going through a crisis or needs emotional support. [Crisis Services Canada](#) provides a list of crisis and listening centers across the country (including local grief and bereavement support groups). These centers are there to respond to people who ask for help.

[Read the full article from the McMaster Optimal Aging Portal.](#)

Article courtesy of the McMaster Optimal Aging Portal.

Over 500 challenge participants in third annual Social Isolation Awareness Month

The RTOERO Foundation's third annual Social Isolation Awareness Month campaign wrapped up at the end of October. The campaign's focus was to shine a light on the issue of social isolation.

Five hundred seventy seven people signed up for the weekly challenges.



These challenges were designed to raise awareness of and help identify those who are socially isolated. The challenges led to an exploration of community resources that are available to support lonely and socially isolated seniors.

The last challenge was more of a personal exercise. Participants were asked to assess their own risk of becoming socially isolated and to reflect on steps they can take to reduce or prevent these risks in the future.

The campaign has raised \$85,313 to date thanks in large part to generous donations from RTOERO members. These funds will be granted to social isolation research projects in 2021. The findings, reports and conclusions resulting from these research projects is critical in helping to overcome the risks of being socially isolated.



Apply for RTOERO scholarships by Jan. 29

Every year, RTOERO offers scholarships to post-secondary students. Since the inception of this program, we have awarded \$384,000 to 344 recipients. In 2021, RTOERO will award up to 20 scholarships, valued at \$3,000, to post-secondary (college or university) students.

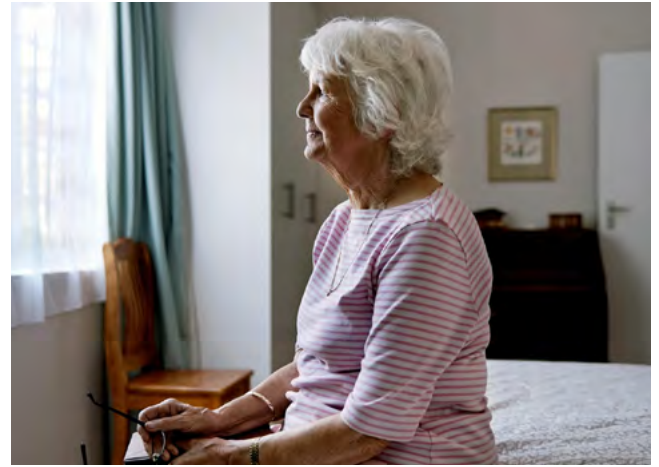
- The applicant must be studying in a college or university program that leads to a career that benefits RTOERO members and seniors.
- This includes fields such as health sciences, medicine, nursing, personal care, geriatric health care, research into healthy active living for seniors, architects and designers of age-friendly spaces.
- The applicant must be recommended by an RTOERO member and provide proof of enrolment.
- Applicants may receive the RTOERO scholarship only once.
- RTOERO members are not themselves eligible for the scholarship.

The deadline for the 2021 scholarships is **Jan. 29**.

Find full details and the application form at rtoero.ca/giving-back/scholarships.

Hearing aids can help reduce dementia risk

To be in control of your mental health is a powerful thing. Although much is still unknown about the causes of cognitive decline and dementia, the 2020 Lancet Report identified hearing loss as the largest risk factor that you can do something about.



It turns out, if you have hearing loss, wearing hearing aids can reduce your modifiable risk of dementia by 8 per cent.

A 25-year prospective study of 3,777 people aged 65 years or older found more dementia cases among those with self-reported hearing problems, except those who wore hearing aids.

In a separate survey of 2,040 people older than 50 years, memory deteriorated less after hearing aid use and adjusting for other risk factors.

Beyond reducing your dementia risk, treating hearing loss early with hearing aids can help people lead a higher quality of life, stay active and prevent the risks of untreated hearing loss, which include isolation and depression.

Hearing aids are a gateway to communication and can help facilitate a healthy and active lifestyle through all stages of life, especially in mid to later stages, when the risk for dementia increases.

[Article courtesy of HearingLife.](#)



Supporting your community doesn't have to stop during a pandemic



The season of giving is upon us, granted with some additional challenges this year, but that doesn't mean the caring and support has to stop. Here are some ways to give back while respecting physical distancing and COVID-19 restrictions:

- Support those around you who may be isolated or at greater-risk of infection by offering to pick up their groceries when you run your errands. If you are able to, offer

to make it a regular errand! If you aren't able to provide a regular grocery shop, offer to pick up a meal for them while you're out.

- If you have the means, donate as a staff team, group of friends or as a family to a reputable association or community program to support those individuals and families who are in need. Supporting our local communities is more important than ever. Gift, clothing and food drive donation programs (may only allow monetary donations during COVID-19) are still ongoing and in need. Check your local community listings to find out where donations are needed.
- Virtually volunteer! You can still volunteer virtually by supporting fundraising and awareness campaigns through communications initiatives and phone operations, or by helping with virtual events.
- If you are able bodied, support neighbours and friends by clearing their cars, walkways and driveways of ice and snow throughout the winter season. If you are unable to offer direct support yourself, you can help find local community resources by searching your municipality's directory online.

Analyzing COVID-19 outbreaks and resident deaths in for-profit long-term care homes



Long-term care (LTC) homes have been the epicentre of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, with residents of these homes accounting for around 80 per cent of the country's deaths. Previous research shows that for-profit LTC homes deliver inferior care compared to non-profit homes, raising the question of whether for-profit homes have had worse COVID-19 outcomes.

A new study from Dr. Nathan Stall, a geriatrician and research fellow at Women's College Research Institute (WCRI), and Dr. Paula Rochon, vice-president of research at Women's College Hospital (WCH) and RTOERO chair in geriatric medicine, found that the for-profit status of LTC homes was associated with larger COVID-19 outbreaks and higher numbers of resident COVID-19 deaths.

The study examined all LTC homes and their residents in Ontario from March 29 to May 20, 2020. For-profit status of LTC homes was associated with an approximate two-fold increase in the extent of a COVID-19 outbreak and a 178 per cent increase in the number of resident deaths compared to non-profit homes. Of the 10 homes with the highest death rates, seven were for-profit-homes with older design standards and chain ownership.

Recent public attention on LTC homes presents an opportunity to examine the root causes of COVID-19 and think creatively about how to provide LTC residents with the best medical care and quality of life. By considering how the physical design of LTC homes impacts the care of its residents, this evidence will help support capital projects to retrofit or rebuild older LTC homes.

Article courtesy of Dr. Paula Rochon

Don't distance yourself from your happiness

“During these unprecedented times” is a phrase we've all heard a lot of this year; and while these times may be getting less unprecedented as the months go on, it is even more important to embrace the things that bring us joy.



Here are three simple reminders to help keep us on the path to happiness:

Make quality time for joyful activities - If there's a special activity you enjoy or a hobby you simply usually don't have time for, make the effort to set aside the time and treat yourself to that activity.

Reach out to others - Social connections need to continue (virtually or at a distance). Whether it's a phone call or video call, speaking to friends and family will not only be good for you, but also for the person you are reaching out to.

Laugh - It is often said that laughter is the best medicine. Whether it's a podcast, TV show or movie, embracing humour is a great way to lift your spirits.

We often take the simple joys in life for granted. Making an effort to note what makes you happy in your day-to-day routine will help amplify your own personal happiness as we navigate through the final weeks of 2020.

RTOERO STAFF PROFILE



Name: Sonya Walker

Title: Benefits Coordinator

How long have you been at RTOERO? 1.5 years already!

How do you help RTOERO Members?

As part of the health benefits team, I spend much of my time corresponding with new and prospective members. I share details about the amazing RTOERO health benefits program and offer guidance throughout the application process. I work closely with our business partners to ensure our members are well taken care of and explore all avenues to find solutions should obstacles arise. I am proud to provide support during the virtual Retirement Planning Workshops

and New Member Webinars. I am passionate about ensuring education sector retirees are prepared as they transition to retirement and begin exploring all the wonderful facets of RTOERO membership.

What do you enjoy most about working at RTOERO? Our members. I feel very fortunate to connect with interesting, vibrant, caring and compassionate individuals on a daily basis. It motivates me to provide the best experience possible for them.