

Pembroke Diocesan Council of the Catholic Women's League of Canada
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Pat Weller, Community Life Chair

What could be more important than a safe, secure and healthy living environment when considering the dignity and rights of persons, one that considers not only the physical space but the supports that nurture physical and mental well-being, a place that allows residents autonomy and a voice in their day-to-day activities, and a place where they can connect with their neighbours and form "community".

Although Long Term Care (LTC) homes provide an important level of care that cannot easily be secured outside the institutional setting, research suggests that older adults would prefer to remain in their own homes.

Recent media reports have drawn attention to a particular living arrangement called NORCs (Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities), geographic areas where adults 55 years and older make up at least 40% of the population. NORCs generally include a communal space for resident planned activities and shared meals, and the services of a co-ordinator to draw on available community resources to enrich residents' lives. Studies by *Health Services and Policy Research Institute* at Queen's University show that adults living in these communities are more physically and socially active, have decreased social isolation (loneliness), and use the health care system less frequently¹. These living arrangements draw on the concept of family; a connected, caring and supportive group working together for the betterment of each individual; a place where burdens and blessings are shared.

What contribution can we make to enhance the physical or social activity for older adults in our own communities? Small gestures have potential to translate into large rewards for residents like those at Eganville's Fairfield Assisted Living facility where staff member Brenda Dwyer (Douglas CWL member) shares her many gifts including barn board painting². Whether urban or rural, institutional or private, the needs of the people are basically the same: supported living where daily lives can be lived out safely and securely and where individuals are treated with care, respect and dignity.

¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-may-11-2021-1.6021707/bringing-services-to-where-seniors-already-live-could-be-an-alternative-to-long-term-care-experts-say-1.6022066>. Accessed May 14, 2021.

² "Fairfields residents stay busy during lockdown", *The Eganville Leader*, p. 12, May 12, 2021.