

# Ontario Provincial Council Community Life - Directive #1

Care for our Common Home

## Directive # 1 Pages: 1 Attachments: 2 September 1st, 2019

To: Diocesan Community Life Standing Chairpersons

From: Mary Capobianco, Ontario Provincial Council, Community Life Chairperson

cc: Diocesan Presidents, Provincial Officers, National Community Life Chairperson and Sub-committee chairperson.

\*

Attachments: Quick Start - Reference Guide for Community Life Standing Chairpersons

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live. - George Bernard Shaw

Dear Sisters in the League,

It is a great pleasure to send my first directive as the Community Life Chairperson for the Ontario Provincial Council. I look forward to working with all the newly elected and returning diocesan chairpersons, for the community life committees. Community Life has always been one of my favourite standing committees and I am very excited to begin this new adventure.

My bio is available on-line, on the provincial website, but in summary I joined the League in 1992. I have held various positions at the parish, regional, diocesan and provincial levels. Over the next two years, my goal is to raise awareness and encourage all of you to actively promote social justice and human rights issues, at home and abroad. To join me on this journey, I have invited Sharon St. Jean to serve with me, as my sub-committee chairperson. Sharon is the former past president for the Ottawa Diocese and an amazing partner to work with.

### **Quick Start Reference Guide**

As I started to pull out the reference materials for community life, I realized there were a number of resources to pull from. To assist those that may be just starting out in this position or perhaps help existing chairpersons with some new ideas, I created the *Quick Start Reference Guide.* (see attached). I selected activities from past annual reports and compiled a list of items you may want to choose from. Note that these are suggestions only and not a "must-do" list. My hope is that you will find this reference guide helpful.

### Focus for 2019 - 2021

Firstly, I would like to congratulate all members for so generously embracing the theme of Homelessness and the Warmth and Comfort Project, for the last two years. I sincerely hope that everyone will continue with their efforts to respond to the needs of the vulnerable, in their parishes and communities. For the next two years, our Provincial President, Colleen Perry, has challenged us to build on that momentum and focus on **Loneliness**. Loneliness, by definition, is a complex and usually unpleasant emotional response to isolation. Loneliness typically includes anxious feelings about a lack of connection or communication with other beings. The causes of loneliness are varied and include social, mental, emotional, and physical factors.

Dr. David William, the Chief Ontario Medical Officer, in his 2019 Annual report states that *Loneliness and Social Isolation* are now widely recognized as public health issues in Ontario. A key take away from that report, is that increasing connectedness and sense of belonging is a complex community issue. It requires organizations, groups, governments and citizens to work together to address this complex community issue.

In fact, loneliness and isolation are prevalent across Canada and some even consider it an epidemic. According to Dr. Robin Lennox a family physician and assistant professor at McMaster University, more and more community surveys are finding anywhere between 25 and 30 per cent of Canadians, across various age groups, are reporting persistent loneliness and social isolation.

The reasons for loneliness are varied and many. Interestingly, Government statistics show that 28 per cent of households are single-person, which may also lead to social isolation. The advancements in technology also play a significant role in the increase of loneliness and social isolation. The increased use of social media, which is actually usually done alone, may be inadvertently creating more isolation, even though we're trying to engage on different platforms.

Research also shows that loneliness is prevalent throughout society, including people in marriages, relationships, families, veterans, and those with successful careers. Loneliness is often defined in terms of one's connectedness to others.

Colleen Perry has asked each standing chairperson to develop a plan of how they can address this issue in their committees. To this end, I would like to initiate the following project for the Community Life Standing Committee.

The C.A.R.E. Connection Project.

C - Communicate - Reach out to someone. It starts with a simple Hello

A - Act - Do something! Don't just think about doing it or don't wait. Just do it!

**R - Respect** - Respect people's situation. Don't judge. Be aware of their boundaries.

**E - Engage** - You just need to take that first step to make a world of difference to someone.

The ways to address this project may look very different, depending on the needs of your council, parish and community. Some of the councils and parishes may already have something in place to address the issue of loneliness and isolation. If so, I would love to hear from you so we can all share the ideas. Please email me and let me know.

- \* How does your council keep in touch with those members that can't attend meetings or attend regular Mass? How do you communicate with them?
- \* Does your council have a telephone committee?
- \* Does your parish have a Caring Ministry; a hospitality committee or greeters?
- \* Does your parish have a youth group; a craft circle, a mom and tots group?
- \* Do you have a group that visits shut-ins, nursing homes etc.?

Perhaps you may consider establishing a sub-committee under community life, to focus on this issue. Champion this for your council, parish and community and help make us a truly connected society again.

I look forward to hearing from all of you with your ideas and/or any other suggestions you may have to make the **C.A.R.E Connection Project** successful.

With Prayers and Blessings,

## Mary Capobianco