

We are thrilled to connect with our Birches community at this time, to share a glimpse into our work during the 2020-21 year. The world will recognize this year as the year of the COVID-19 pandemic. For us, it has been a challenging and rewarding year, heavily influenced by the pandemic, but also by our desire to continue to do all we can to offer a community of dignified, gracious living to those we serve.

We are proud to say that our team acted swiftly in our response to the pandemic, and has worked hard throughout the past year to prevent the spread of infection and support quality of life for residents despite many challenges. We are thrilled to report that, to-date, no Birches residents have tested positive for COVID-19. We are immensely proud of the team for all they did this year to accomplish this, and have shared a deeper look at this work in its entirety within this report.

Though our strong team and strong values have helped us weather the past year, we think it is important to acknowledge that the pandemic has revealed issues within our long term care sector which we have been aware of for some time. Against the backdrop of COVID-19, it is impossible not to recognize that there are areas in our system that require collective focus and innovative solutions.

As the Birches Board of Directors continues to partner with the Ocean View Board of Directors in our Joint Advocacy Committee, we are striving to influence change in these areas. We believe it is our responsibility to advocate for positive change in the long term care sector across our province. For this reason, we were thrilled this year to hear that the province announced a number of long term care homes that will be prioritized for redevelopment/replacement, including our own. We will speak more about this exciting announcement later in this report!

As recent events have reminded us, both challenges and opportunities are inevitable in our long term care world, as in the world at large. Here at The Birches, we will continue to rise to both with strong values, a dedicated community of folks who believe in our work, and a drive to provide the best place to live and work.

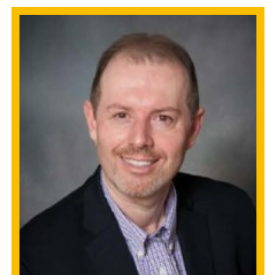
We thank you for being a member of our Birches community, and invite you to join us in celebrating the inspirational things our team has accomplished throughout this year!



Rick Anderson,  
Board Chair



Dion Mouland,  
CEO



# Our Pandemic Experience

As the COVID-19 pandemic has evolved this year, our team has worked hard to live infection prevention and control practices each and every day. Together, we have continued to navigate this time with guidance from our pandemic plan; information from Public Health; and advice from Nova Scotia's Chief Medical Officer.

Throughout this experience, we've reflected often on the value that family members have always brought to life at The Birches, and to their loved ones who reside here. Our team has worked hard to create opportunity for families to connect with residents. Indoor visits, window visits, virtual visits, and phone calls have been bright spots for residents. In September, we were able to welcome Designated Caregivers back in to our facility, and they have made an amazing difference!

In late 2020, we were thrilled to begin offering biweekly COVID-19 serial testing at the Birches for members of our team. The purpose of serial testing is to identify asymptomatic individuals. It is thought that asymptomatic spread has contributed to outbreaks of COVID-19 in other long term care homes, so serial testing is an important step to keep our residents safe. We are proud of our team for embracing serial testing this year!



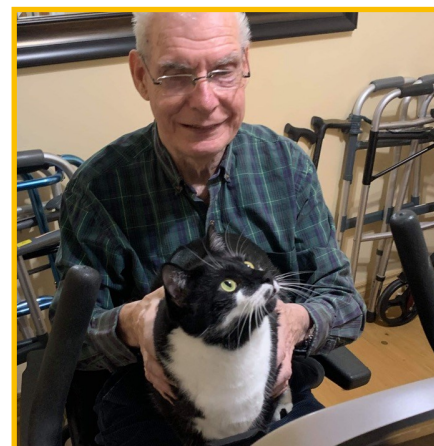
We were also thrilled to be able to rollout COVID-19 vaccination for both Birches residents and staff members this year. This news was very hopeful for many, including residents who are eager for signs that life may eventually return to normal.

We are hopeful for calmer days ahead as well. But whatever the future holds, our team continues to strive to support our residents, families, volunteers and colleagues; and to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

## A Home-Like Environment — Baby Dolls and Furry Friends

Pets are a wonderful addition to long term care homes. They can fill seniors with feel-good endorphins, alleviate loneliness, give seniors a sense of purpose, and provide an opportunity for fun and play! Doll Therapy also offers a lot of these same benefits — a doll can often decrease stress and agitation, and offer comfort and companionship. They also offer an opportunity for caring and structure.

With all of this in mind, this year we welcomed cats **David** and **Goliath** to our Birches family, and also introduced a new **Doll Therapy** program! Welcome to all of our new friends!



# Living and Working at The Birches

**Kelly** has been a part of our Birches team as an LPN for more than 28 years, but she says this year certainly had many unique challenges.

Kelly says some residents have had a good sense of what has been going on this year, and have kept informed. Others who don't understand the pandemic have had a difficult time. The introduction of different types of visitation has been exciting for residents and staff alike.

"The isolation away from their families is awful for them," Kelly shares, "The window visits was the first thing, and the excitement was there for that!"

Overall, what does Kelly say has been the highlight of the year?

"It is a hard year," she admits, "but I think working through COVID, getting through day-to-day with all of the new changes and challenges, and we've kept our nursing home COVID free... that's number one! I think that has been the scariest part and the best part!"



**Jessie,**  
resident

**Jessie** moved into the Birches this year, and like most residents, got through the pandemic with patience day-by-day.

"I think everybody's doing their best," she said of her fellow residents, "What else would we do!"

During the pandemic, Jessie enjoyed the efforts made by staff to still have meaningful activities for residents. She was especially fond of playing Bingo, singing songs, and spending time with our new cats at The Birches — David and Goliath.

"I had a cat for 18 years... I loved that cat," Jessie remembered, "The cats that are here, I think they're so nice!"

Jessie was also thrilled to have different types of visitation open up for her loved ones to come see her, and to have had the opportunity to participate in COVID-19 vaccination. Overall, she was grateful for all of the hard work that went into responding to the pandemic and keeping everyone safe.

"Thank god for the doctors, the nurses, and **everyone who has done what they've done to prevent it from spreading**," she said!

*We share this profile in loving memory of Jessie (1928—2021).  
We were lucky to have known her.*



**Kelly,**  
LPN

## An even better place to live and work - thanks to the *Twin Oaks / The Birches Health Care Charitable Foundation*

This year, thanks to the continued generous support of the *Twin Oaks/The Birches Health Care Charitable Foundation*, we have continued to make improvements to life at The Birches, including painting our resident rooms!

This has been on our wish list for some time, and we're so thrilled to say that, despite challenges posed by the pandemic, the painting was able to begin earlier this year! You can check out the fresh new look in the photo to the right, along with our fantastic new curtains and bedside tables for resident rooms (also thanks to the Foundation!).



## An Exciting Announcement for the Birches' Future

We were proud in 2021 to announce that the Government of Nova Scotia has included our facility in a list of long term care homes to be redeveloped/replaced. We are dedicated to providing a community of dignified, gracious living to local seniors, but as with many older long term care facilities, the home's outdated infrastructure is becoming less and less suitable for the needs of today's long term care residents.

"Our team does an excellent job of offering quality care despite our aging facility, but the challenges presented by features like aging electrical, aging plumbing, and small shared rooms are often significant," says Dion, our President & CEO, "Infrastructure renewal is an important focus of the strategic plan we developed in consultation with our community in 2018, so it is a privilege to have been selected for these upgrades."

The leadership team and Board of Directors at the Birches are committed to making swift decisions based on the needs of local seniors, and moving this momentous project forward quickly.

"As a Board of Directors, we believe it is our responsibility to advocate for positive change in the long term care sector across our province," says Rick, Chair of the Board of Directors, "With this announcement, the government echoes our belief that our seniors are a priority, and are deserving of the best possible quality of life we can provide."

## Long Service Awards

Our *Long Service Awards* recognize those who have dedicated a milestone amount of years to creating a community of dignified, gracious living for those we serve.

*Congrats to Long Services Award recipients this year!:*

**Christine Bowser, 20 years**  
**Ronald Blakeney, 10 years**

**Rebecca Murphy, 15 years**  
**Kimberley Williams, 10 years**