

## The Power of Peer Support: Reducing Social Isolation in Residential Care PROJECT UPDATE

The *Power of Peer Support: Reducing Social Isolation in Residential Care* is collaborative project between the Bruyère Centre for Learning, Research and Innovation (CLRI) in Long-Term Care, Bruyère Continuing Care's Therapeutic Support Services, Carleton University's Department of Health Sciences and Java Group Programs. This project is well underway, and we wanted to provide an update to our supporters.

We were delighted to have had a number of exceptionally qualified applicants representing long term care (LTC) homes across Ontario. In total, 30 LTC homes and 5 retirement homes received a Java Music Club license and program materials with rural, smaller care homes prioritised and five homes received Java Music Club program materials in French. The Java Music Club program materials include: step-by-step instructions, a group manual, a facilitator's guide, a hand-carved Aboriginal talking stick, an implementation training DVD and 8 CDs of custom recorded music in lower keys that are easier to sing. As a bonus to participants of this project, they were also provided a set of table top wind chimes for the 'getting centred' practice.

### What have we accomplished so far?

The Java Music Club is a research-based weekly peer support group for older adults, including those living with mild to moderate stage dementia that is based on the altruistic concept that people are happiest when they are helping one another. The program uses themes chosen by participants to facilitate sharing and emotional support, music, readings and photographs. A second program, Java Memory Care, is adapted for residents with moderate to advanced dementia.

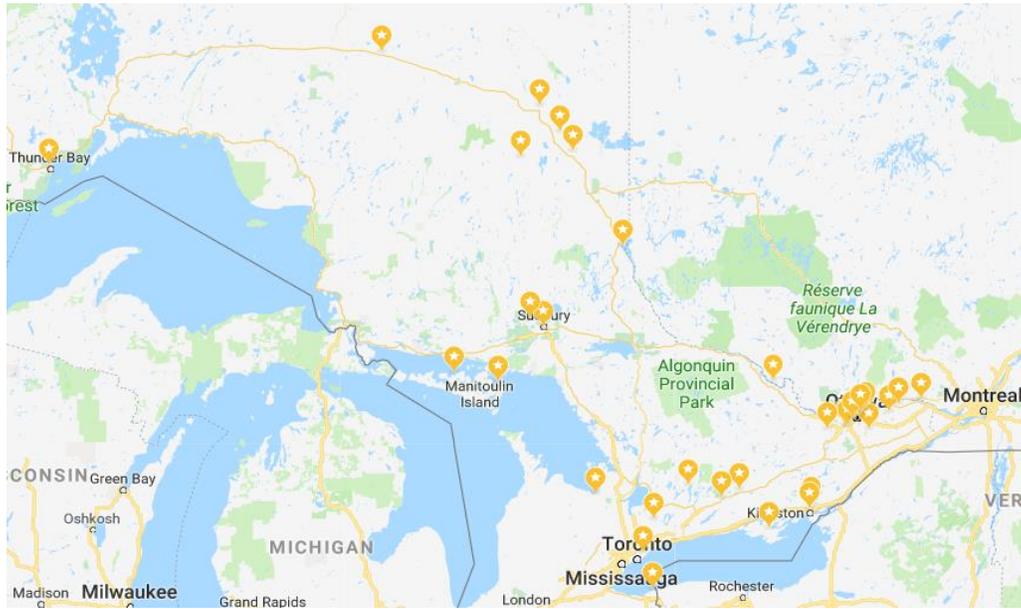
Providence Manor in Kingston, Golden Manor in Timmins and The Glebe Centre in Ottawa hosted 3 all-day workshops. We thank these three homes for their generosity of welcoming groups of LTC homes. There were a total of 77 participants representing 35 long-term care and retirement homes across Ontario (see map on the next page).

Kristine Theurer (President of Java Group Programs) facilitated these interactive workshops. They included a live demonstration of the Java Music Club with a group of volunteer residents. Participants were exceptionally enthusiastic and eager to implement the Java Music Club in their homes. Some of the recreation staff from the host site shared that they were surprised how quickly the residents in the demonstration group opened up and shared their struggles with feelings of loneliness. It was a powerful moment for all participants.



Both Java Music Club and Java Memory Care have shown success in alleviating loneliness and depression. We will advance our understanding of the benefits to the individual residents (psychosocial and cognitive health outcomes) with research set to begin soon in collaboration with MSc students supervised by Dr. Renate Ysseldyk from the Carleton University Department of Health Sciences. We will research the benefits of the Java Music Club in Riverstone Retirement Communities, while focusing on Java Memory Care at Élisabeth Bruyère Residence. We are delighted to have the opportunity to partner with Riverstone Retirement Communities and Bruyère Continuing Care to explore the various benefits of these programs, and appreciate the ongoing support of staff members from those homes.

## LTC and retirement homes that participated in workshops & received Java Music Club program materials



### A Webinar-centric January

- ❖ First we held an online refresher for the Kingston and Timmins workshop participants to boost their knowledge as they prepared to conduct the program in their homes. 16 Ontario LTC homes participated.
- ❖ On January 18, a 1-hr webinar entitled “It Takes the Loneliness Away: Reducing Social Isolation Among Older Adults” drew 129 participants from across the Ontario seniors care sector. This webinar shared with a broad audience how peer support can help advance psychosocial care and explore the research results of the implementation of the Java peer support programs in LTC and retirement homes. The recording of the webinar is available here: <https://youtu.be/6vb6l212qoo>.
- ❖ The third webinar on Java Memory Care (“Java Time”) was for the recreation team at Élisabeth Bruyère Residence and Health Sciences MSc students from Carleton University who are involved in the research.

### Next steps

The next months will remain busy for our project team. We are setting up regional coaching sub-groups for homes who participated in one of the face-to-face workshops. These teleconferences will offer an opportunity for LTC homes to share their successes and bring up challenges with coaches and with one another.

This spring, we will be hosting a series of complimentary webinars. These webinars are geared towards homes which have *already implemented Java programs* as an opportunity to enhance their group facilitation skills. Topics include:

- ❖ Becoming an Extraordinary Group Facilitator (April)
- ❖ Cultivating Empathy (May)
- ❖ Dealing with Emotions (June)
- ❖ Embracing Diversity (July)

Interested homes can sign up via the CLRI website ([www.clri-ltc.ca/events](http://www.clri-ltc.ca/events)). Please promote these great learning opportunities among your networks!

We value your continued support and enthusiasm. If you have any questions, please contact Michelle Fleming, Research Coordinator & Knowledge Broker at [mfleming@bruyere.ca](mailto:mfleming@bruyere.ca).

*This project is a collaboration between the Bruyère Centre for Learning, Research and Innovation (CLRI) in Long-Term Care, Bruyère Continuing Care’s Therapeutic Support Services, Carleton University’s Department of Health Sciences and Java Group Programs. It is funded by the Centre for Aging + Brain Health Innovation (CABHI), Carleton University and the Government of Ontario through the Bruyère CLRI.*