

BETHANY PIONEER VILLAGE INC. 2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Monday, November 29, 2021

BOARD CHAIR ADDRESS – SHARON CARTER

The Law of the White Horse. There was a point in my life where there were some really hard days and I happened to read this story about the Law of the White Horse. Its impact was immediate and it changed how I see the world and everything that happens in it. I have found myself coming back to this story many times since the onset of Covid19. This is an old story from South America.

A white stallion rode into the paddocks of an old man and all the villagers congratulated him on such good fortune. And the old man only offered this: Is it a curse or a blessing? All we can see is a sliver. Who can see what will come next?

When the white horse ran off, the townsfolk were convinced the white stallion had been a curse. The old man living surrendered and satisfied in the will of God alone said: I cannot see as He sees.

And when the horse returned with a dozen more horses, the townsfolk declared it a blessing, yet the old man said only: It is as He wills and I give thanks for His will.

Then the man's only son broke his leg when thrown from the white stallion. The town folk all bemoaned the bad fortune of that white stallion. And the old man only offered: We'll see. We'll see. It is as He wills and I give thanks for His will.

When a draft for a war took all the young men off to battle except for the son with a broken leg, the villagers all proclaimed the good fortune of that white horse. And the old man said but this: We see only a sliver of the sum. We cannot see how the bad might be good. God is sovereign and He is good and He sees and works all things together for good.

Each of us has had those "white horse" moments in our lives where we see only the sliver and it isn't until time has passed and we have gained the perspective to see how living through feared, uncomfortable and frustrating experiences have actually brought amazing changes in directions and accomplishments that would not have been possible except for that "white horse" moment.

This is how we can see God at work at Bethany. Over its 65-year history Bethany has travelled through many "white horse" moments and perspective allows us to see how the grace of God and his faithful presence has been and still is with us.

In January of 2018 a “white horse” situation occurred at Bethany that had to be addressed, and, at the same time the board observed vulnerabilities to Bethany as an organization. Without that “white horse” situation, those vulnerabilities would not have been identified and they would have continued to erode Bethany’s strength as a health-care organization.

With Sinikka’s up-coming retirement in 2018, the board’s search for a new Administrator focused on finding someone with proven experience in helping an organization work through areas of concern that would require changes, someone familiar with provincial health-care administration and HR policies and procedures, and someone with experience in overseeing the financing and construction of a new building. At the end of May, 2018, Lisa Irlbeck settled in to her new job as Bethany’s CEO/Administrator and immediately began working with contractors for the new multipurpose room.

And, one-by-one, areas of concern that could potentially create vulnerabilities for Bethany were dealt with. Areas such as:

- Out-of-scope employee files did not have contracts or evaluations.
- Out-of-scope employee salaries, including the Administrator, were not in line with SAHO out-of-scope evaluations and classifications and were not competitive with other homes.
- There were gaps in CCA and nurses training that were not up-to-date with Health Authority directives.
- Aspen’s nurse call-bell system did not function properly.
- An out-of-date security system needed replacing.
- Aspen’s roof needed extensive repair or replacement.
- The phone systems in the offices were so old that parts were no longer available for repairs.
- When Bethany’s power system was tested every Tuesday morning, a 10-minute power outage occurred while waiting for the generator to kick in.
- The office layout did not allow for administrative privacy with family members or staff.
- Office computer systems and processes were so archaic that the Administrator did not have access to personally view all financial transactions needed to create adequate reporting.
- Birch Manor room renovations were needed in order to meet changing resident expectations and needs.

The board had been working with Lisa on these vulnerabilities and the completion of the new multipurpose room for 15 months when the Covid19 “white horse” arrived and just kept on staying. The next 20-months involved doing our best to work within the restrictions that the virus brought to all of us and to give Lisa the space she needed to focus on the health and safety of Bethany’s 100 residents and 76 staff.

Through information emails from Lisa, we were aware of the intense stress staff, residents and family members were experiencing as constant Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) policy changes had to be implemented in an attempt to keep everyone safe.

April 27, 2021 was day 427 of the lockdown and over 2,000 policy changes from SHA had been implemented at that point. I remember that day well as residents and staff had received their double vaccinations and the board was able to meet in person with masks and appropriate distancing. Of the 250 Long-Term Care homes in Saskatchewan, Bethany was one of 42 that were cleared and approved to allow visitors by appointment. Birch was cleared as well. We were breathing easier and telling ourselves, “Surely the worst is over.” Unfortunately, as we all know, that has not been the case.

The role of Bethany’s Board of Directors is to direct and control the entire organization through the process of governance. The Board creates and maintains the strategic plan, monitors performance, measures results and delegates authority to the Administrator to manage and oversee operations. The Administrator is the main point of communication between the Board and corporate operations.

The Board works closely with the Administrator to ensure that our strategic planning remains in alignment with the Saskatchewan Health Authority in order to be at the forefront of the future of health-care in the province. As we move forward with strategic planning we work with consultants to analyze and formulate decisions based on what is best for our residents and staff, both now and for the future viability of Bethany as an organization.

Over the years Bethany has been blessed with many staff who have remained with us right up to their retirement years. Several of our long-time, experienced staff are now enjoying their well-deserved retirement. Thankfully, our staffing needs are being met with a combination of experienced staff and younger generation staff members who are choosing to work at Bethany.

Priority items for the Board's immediate and long-term strategic planning are:

- Understanding and developing strategies for meeting the changing needs and expectations of residents and staff.
- Working with community partners in addressing staff housing and daycare needs.

Priority items for Board Committees are:

- Communicating regularly with Bethany families and staff, community members and our membership using a combination of technology (facebook, website, email) and paper copies.
- Complete a review of bylaw amendments for member approval.
- Complete a review of governance amendments.

Thank you to everyone for joining us here this evening and for sharing this opportunity for all of us to reconnect.