

# THE AGE BLOG



There is no one person, program, policy, practice or quick fix for the complex issues of dementia care. Rather, solutions live in a collaboration of people, programs, policies, practices and partnerships, focused on education and with a person-centred approach at their core. As a new year approaches, we'd like to share stories of hope and joy sent to us over the past year — all of them achieved through collaboration.

Since the 1990s, the gerontological community in Ontario has worked diligently to nurture a culture of person-centred dementia care through education. As 2019 approaches, that culture is working, growing and enhancing the lives of those living with the disease and those who care for them. How do we know this?

AGE receives testimonials from all over Canada that attest to the value of dementia education at the point of care. Unfortunately, the thousands of success stories and all the excellent work happening every day in care are often overshadowed by media stories of long-term care homes that have experienced catastrophic outcomes. As educators, we know that staff education is critical to minimizing and hopefully eradicating these horrific, unacceptable events. Yes! There is still a great deal to be done. And yes, as educators we must remain ever vigilant and vocal to ensure dementia knowledge and skills are accessible to those who need them. However, it's not often that the world at large hears about success stories in dementia care and there are many. We thought we'd take a moment to share a few. They remind us why we continue to do what we do and inspire us to do more. Some successes are large, others may seem quite small — each of them matters!

Through the [AGE Recognition Program](#), GPA Certified Coaches (our dementia education champions) shared stories of positive change in a range of care settings this year.

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## A world of excellence

*"Across Ontario and Canada you will find a surprising world of excellence, knowledge and innovation that has positively impacted the lives of people living with dementia."*

— Lori Schindel Martin, RN, PhD, President-Elect, Canadian Gerontological Nursing Association, Chair of the AGE Research & Development Committee



(The links below highlight these stories ... click on them to learn more.)

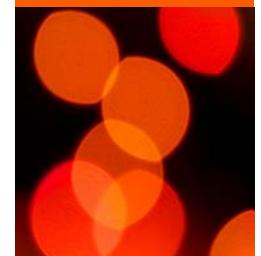
In each story, getting to know the person behind the disease is the common thread. AGE heard from long-term care homes that have eliminated all restraints and from hospitals experiencing a decrease in Code Whites and falls, achieved through education. Coaches told us about residents who, originally hesitant to engage, are now regularly involved in activities. Professionals outside of healthcare have seen dementia care strategies and techniques in action and been motivated to make changes in their own interactions with older adults. A staff member in nutrition services overcame her fear of interacting with persons living with dementia and is now enjoying newfound confidence in her daily interactions. It's exciting when empowering just one person can bring about change in the lives of many. Care teams told us how strategies and techniques for mitigating risk and deescalating responsive behaviours are helping residents find new purpose and meaning in the everyday. Families are being encouraged to get engaged in their loved one's care plans. Commitments to use person-centred language in interactions are being made a priority by organizations and often embedded into policy. And staff who don't have dementia education are requesting it, motivated by a desire to enhance their day-to-day connections with residents, patients or clients.

### On collaboration

*If you want to go quickly, go alone.*

*If you want to go far, go together.*

*- African proverb*



Dementia education is empowering Canada's future care providers, our healthcare students. Read the testimonials that come from educators, employers and the students on the value of dementia education. Directors of care agencies felt students with dementia education training were "more prepared and knowledgeable." In fact, outcomes showed statistically significant student caregiver improvements in areas such as confidence, competence and knowledge acquisition. Student training now often includes learning respectful self-protection techniques in preparation for situations that may arise during placements. When sustained, this knowledge and its accompanying skills and confidence will be invaluable in their careers. And therein lies the key! **Sustainability**. Organizations are realizing that it's not enough to hold one education session — they are regularly refreshing staff knowledge and skills and supporting informal coaching, on-the-spot mentoring for care staff through the GPA Certified Coach in-house champion model. Take a moment to follow the links to the real-life stories above. They are heartfelt, heartwarming and hopeful.

AGE's main product, the Gentle Persuasive Approaches (GPA®) in Dementia Care curriculum, is one of a number of evidence-based dementia education initiatives across Canada. Until a cure is found, we must continue collaborating — governments, organizations, educational institutions, care teams and individuals, always with input from those with lived experience and their families. Together, we must ensure that all the good work continues and learning and practice evolve as new research findings on the disease arrive.

We wish you a wonderful holiday season and a happy new year. To our partners and stakeholders we say thank you — these stories tell us that *together, we really are making a difference*. The new year will bring new challenges, but also new strengths. It will bring more dementia diagnoses, but also more people, ideas, innovations and research to give new hope to those living with the disease. Over the past year, AGE certified more than 500 new GPA Coaches to deliver dementia education across Canada. For us, as educators, that's hope multiplied.

Behavioural Supports Ontario (BSO), the main driver of dementia education in the province of Ontario, is preparing to release Version 2 of its **Behavioural Education and Training Supports Inventory (BETSI)** Tool, developed to strengthen the capacity of professionals through education and focused training that transfers knew knowledge into practice. AGE Executive Director, Patti Boucher, was a collaborator on this important project.

To learn more about the BETSI update [click here](#)



## Holiday Message from Patti Boucher AGE Executive Director

Here we are at December again. What a busy, eventful year it has been at AGE!. It's

almost the end of our 3rd (fiscal) quarter and we've had 15 GPA CC Workshops just this quarter! We're so pleased – that's another 235 GPA Certified Coaches to spread a person-centred approach to care. Kudos to all GPA CCs and organizations for continuing to support, promote and sustain the value of dementia education for staff, students and volunteers. We tend to think about the Gentle Persuasive Approaches (GPA®) curriculum in terms of caregivers, but volunteers can benefit too. Recently in Thunder Bay (ON), St. Joseph's Care Group and Hospice Northwest held their first official GPA education session for volunteers. Volunteer feedback said it was a wonderful learning experience with knowledge they could immediately put to use.

Demand for the GPA eLearning (digital) format has increased dramatically this year. We are preparing to launch a new product called Integrated GPA (iGPA) in 2019. This blended learning experience combines eLearning with a half-day classroom session led by a GPA Certified Coach. Last month, we introduced it to higher learning institutions. In January, it will be made available to all organizations as an alternative option to a full-day session. We believe it will be a popular, since its format alleviates scheduling logistics for organizations and reduces back-fill. Watch for our official launch in the new year. If you'd like a sneak peek at the program, [click here to download the iGPA Flyer](#).

In closing, I wish each of you a wonderful holiday with lots of time spent with family and friends sharing in the spirit of the season. All the best for 2019. We've also included a few pics of GPA around the country this past year that we thought you might enjoy.

Patti



1. Volunteers in Thunder Bay (ON) after a GPA session. 2. Honourable Mention went to the Government of Nunavut in the AGE Recognition Awards\*. 3. Group activities at a GPA Certified Coach (CC) Workshop in North York (ON). 4. GPA CCs from Halton Healthcare (ON), having a little fun 5. The Vancouver Coastal Health GPA Team (BC) show off their award\* 6. On set, filming clips for the new GPA Therapeutic Bathing program due out in 2019.



Enhancing the care of older adults by learning together

AGE is a national not-for-profit social enterprise committed to enhancing the care of older adults through dementia education products and services with profits reinvested to further advance our social mission.