**ABOUT CARC**

The Community Attraction and Retention Committee (CARC) serves the communities of Tofield, Village of Ryley and the West area of Beaver County. This committee was formed in January of 2018 and is now entering its 4th year. The committee is diverse in it's membership, representing various organizations in the region. They are from a wide variety of experienced professions (community, municipal, healthcare, social sector, business etc.) that help us identify needs of our local Healthcare Professionals and are also a great resource when working on projects.

In our 4 years, this group of amazing people have accomplished many great things working together. We are always looking for new initiatives to make our HealthCare Professionals feel welcome and appreciated. Following are some of our accomplishments as well as initiatives we have planned.

**COMMITTEE FRAMEWORK**

Terms of Reference: We developed a robust Terms of Reference to provide direction and framework for the committee moving forward. Attached in supporting documents.

Future Endeavors Sub-Committee: Established a future endeavors committee to identify ideas and future goals. We re-visit these ideas each meetings to help us to stay on track with our efforts.

Professional Development: Our committee believes in keeping our membership involved in various education and community development opportunities. We had three members attend the 2018 RhPAP Community Attraction and Retention Conference in Brooks, which was instrumental as we started this journey together. We had four attend the Building Better Communities workshop in Stettler early 2020, where we learned many strategies for attracting and retaining Health Care Professionals. One member also took the six week certificate Building a Better Community Rural Workshop. We also participate regularly in RhPAP's monthly Information Series offerings, and enjoy those immensely.

RhPAP Committee A&R Grant: In 2019, we successfully applied for the RhPAP committee grant of $3,000. Those dollars helped us get started with many of our initiatives. We have attached a copy of our application in the supporting documents.

Funding: Our funding includes the $3,000 RhPAP grant, along with $1,500 cash/gift in kind from our municipal partners (Town of Tofield, Village of Ryley and Beaver County). We are proud to have been operating for the last three years on a minimal budget, proving that you don't need a lot of money to do this type of work. As of February 2021, we have approx. $2,700 still in our account. If we didn't have the partners that we do, we wouldn't be able to do the work we do. It has been exciting to see the support for each of our initiatives!

Regular Meetings: We meet on a monthly basis for the most part and have good participation at each meeting. We always have a prepared agenda, financial statements, and send out detailed minutes post meeting. We always provide opportunity for each community stakeholder to provide updates. We did not let COVID stop us from meeting during the pandemic as we recognize this is when our healthcare professionals need our support and appreciation. We switched to virtual meetings via zoom which has proven to work really well for us. Attached in our supporting documents is a photo of our committee at one of our fall 2020 meetings.

**RELATIONSHIPS/PARTNERS**

Our committee values and recognizes how vital partnerships are. We are so proud of the relationships we have developed with our stakeholders over the last four years. Many organizations and individuals have come to the table for community dialogue on the importance of attracting and retaining health care professionals. People are starting to understand if our HCPs feel welcomed and appreciated, they are more likely to stay in our community. This in turn offers continuity of care for people and keeping healthcare close to home. Including members at large, our committee partners and stakeholders include (but not limited to) : Tofield Health Centre, Alberta Health Services, Tofield and Area Health Foundation, Kalyna Country Primary Care Network, Beaver County, Town of Tofield, Village of Ryley and RhPAP.

Physicians and AHS Health Centre: We are especially proud of three relationships that have come a long way over the last four years: with our local Physicians, the AHS Area Manager - Acute Care Services and the Tofield and Area Health Foundation. The lines of communication are in sync - silos are a thing of the past - working together towards a common goal is our mantra.

Tofield and Area Health Foundation: We are especially proud of how this relationship has grown over the last few years. They support us in everything we do - which is such an important community collaboration. They have dedicated a portion of their website for our committee. They also have information about us on their promotional brochure, as well numerous social media mentions as well. They support our initiatives with much needed funding, as well as people power.

**ATTRACTION EFFORTS**

Community Profiles: To assist us with attraction of health professionals, we built community profiles for Tofield, Village of Ryley and Beaver County to showcase how much this area has to offer.

Post-Secondary Let's Go Rural Skills Weekend: In collaboration with RhPAP, we hosted a very exciting and successful skills weekend for medical and nursing UofA students in April of 2019. This was our first big event which not only provided significant momentum for our committee but was also instrumental in forming many valuable relationships. We engaged with many area partners to provide a great experience for the students, highlighting what it is like to work, live and play here. Examples included donations from local businesses, individual participation from community members (greetings at the supper) and volunteering from our valuable health professionals at the Tofield Health Centre instructing the skills stations, which ended up being a very important portion of the event. Evaluations stated they wanted more of the hands-on time with our Physicians and staff mentors, who also totally embraced the event. Our committee learned so much from this event! We will not soon forget the overall experience and are so proud of how it all came together.

New Nurse! Because of the Let's Go Rural Post Secondary Skills weekend, we attracted a recently graduated nurse to our community. In a recent video produced by RhPAP, she indicated in an interview with CARC Chair, Cyndy Heslin that the Skills weekend was a huge factor in her choosing Tofield Health Centre to start her career. She lives in the area and we anticipate her working in our community for years to come.

Billeting Pilot: As part of the post-secondary skills weekend, we piloted a very successful project – billeting the students with local families. We are the only committee in Alberta to take this approach and were very pleased to see how well it went. Feedback from both billet families and students included how much they appreciated the opportunity of getting to know each other. It gave the families a much needed awareness of what post-secondary students are looking for when they start their careers, and gave the students a viewpoint and deeper understanding of what living rural is really like. We had students placed throughout the area – in the Town of Tofield, on farms and acreages throughout Beaver County and in the village of Ryley. This pilot has provided such a great example – showing other smaller communities that don’t have hotels/motels, that they too can host learners/post-secondary students in their area – for any type of event.

Welcoming Locums: We developed a welcome binder for locum physicians that stays in the locum room at the health centre. This includes information about the area (recreation, business information, services, etc.) We are planning to now include welcome baskets/cards for the locum physicians as well.

Transition to Practice Nursing Edition Virtual Event: Participated in the recent inaugural Transition to Practice - Nursing Edition virtual event in January 2021. We were one of the community presenters, and proudly talked to the participants about why they should consider Tofield, Ryley and Beaver County as a place to work, live and play upon their graduation. We highlighted the benefits of practicing as a rural nurse, the dynamic health centre we have as well as the support they would receive from the team members they would be working alongside. And of course, all the great amenities our region has to offer!

Rural High School Skills Day: Our hope is to host a high school skills day in the near future once COVID restrictions ease. We feel the strategy of "growing our own" is important, with the goal of local high school students considering working in their home town once their post-secondary education is complete. We also see this as an opportunity to collaborate with our local health centre, health professionals, regional schools and other organizations.

**RETENTION**

Appreciation efforts: One of our important ongoing projects is to show appreciation to our physicians and healthcare professionals. We have had to adjust some of our original ideas due to COVID, however, we were not going to let a pandemic stop us! Some of the initiatives over the last four years include:

Thank you notes/snacks: A thank you note was presented and muffins/cookies were delivered to show appreciation to all Nurses for International Nurses week. This was done outside the hospital with masks on.

Physician 5 year anniversary: We partnered with the Tofield and Area Health Foundation to thank Dr. Abuzehar for his five years of service. He was presented with a goody Basket. A photo of this presentation was posted on social media, and received a lot of positive support. Some of the comments included: Treva - "Congrats. It's been a pleasure working with you the last 5 years. I wish you continued success." Ange - "Congratulations Dr. Abuzehar. So glad you are part of our team!" Nicole - "Congratulations, Tofield is lucky to have such a caring and thorough doctor, Thank you”. This photo had significant traction on social media - raising awareness of the importance of appreciating our physicians.

Appreciation Parade (Regional): We organized an appreciation parade of fire, ambulance and police to go through the communities to say thank you to all healthcare professionals. This was well received by the communities and the local newspaper did an article on it.

Volunteer Appreciation: We hosted an appreciation for our Skills Weekend volunteers, billets and partners at the Moonshine Cafe about a month after the event. We offered refreshments, appetizers and premiered the event video. This appreciation event was well attended, and we had some great feedback from it.

Welcome cards (handwritten): We are continuously sending "Welcome to our Community " cards to all new employees at the Tofield Health Centre. These are well received. One employee even tracked done the Chair and sent her a personal thank you.

Welcome basket (Physician): We partnered with the Tofield and Area Health Foundation to Welcomed Dr. Sabha with a basket of goodies and flowers. She was surprised and very thankful.

Appreciation barbeque: Our plans include to host an appreciation BBQ at the health centre (when COVID safe), as well as continuing what we are already doing.

Christmas Cards: In 2020, we put together a thank-you/Christmas card and gave to every local healthcare professional in our area. Over 300 of these cards were sent to staff at the health centre, PCN, medical clinic, EMS, pharmacies, AHS Home Care and Public Health. We have provided the card in our supporting photos.

Smile Initiative: We are currently working on a project where we are going to send each of our local healthcare professionals funny jokes/inspirational quotes and messages (printed on tongue depressers) to bring a smile to their day. We are partnering with various organizations to make this happen and are looking forward to how this goes over!

**ONGOING PROMOTIONS/AWARENESS BUILDING OF CARC**

Logo/Banner: Our committee determined a goal from the beginning to raise awareness in our area about the work we do. To help us achieve that goal, we developed a CARC LOGO, as well as a 2' by 4' promotional banner to be displayed at/on every event we participate in and/or support. Everyone was a part of the designing process, and our banner showcases our partnerships with logos from each of the organizations represented around the table. It is important to us to show our community members how many people are working together with attraction and retention efforts for our local healthcare professionals. Photos of the logo and banner are attached in our supporting documents.

The Banner was first used at an Awareness event at the local Farmers Market. We asked people Health related questions about the area as well as "Did you know" material. Everyone who stopped spun the wheel and were given a prize. Our table was visited often, information was well received, and we had great collaboration with this as all prizes were donated from various regional partners.

Local newspaper: Recently, we were approached by our local media, Tofield Mercury, to work with them on the development of an article on our committee and explain what we do. This is to increase awareness of the work we do, as well on the importance of the attraction and retention of healthcare professionals, as well to highlight our involvement with the recent Nursing T2P event.

Beaver County Chronicle newsletter: We partnered with Beaver County to feature "Did You Know" articles/advertisements about health care in our region. This has been very well received and we are proud of this collaboration.

Social media: We partner with The Tofield and Area Health Foundation, Beaver County, Village of Ryley, Kalyna Country PCN, Town of Tofield - to post various photo's, information and events we are supporting/involved in.

In closing, this Committee is fairly new, but we all have big hearts and visions of making our area a well known and sought after place for Health Care Professionals to want be be. We are all passionate about the work we do and work well together when doing it. We don’t like to think “outside the box” – we like to “remove the box”! Where there is a will there is a way!

So for all of the above I think we are worthy of this awesome award. Thank you for the opportunity for us to showcase all that we do.

Sincerely,

Brenda Chehade

Proud CARC Member