



# Impact Report 2020

# Our story

During the early months of 2020, some of us students at University of Toronto were taking a class on dementia with Dr. Franco Taverna and we had the wonderful opportunity to visit our friends living in local long-term care homes. Due to COVID-19, these homes closed to visitors before everyone else was ordered to lockdown, cutting our visits with our friends short.

In Ontario, long term care homes were the first to be affected by the pandemic and continue to be disproportionately affected. Concerned that we could not meet with our friends, we came together to brainstorm ideas to connect and make sure that social distancing did not mean social isolation. Many homes did not have resources to support video calls or socially distant recreation for their residents. We also recognized the immense strain that healthcare workers were undergoing in trying to stay safe and continue their essential work. The health and wellbeing of healthcare workers is critical in navigating this pandemic. In early May, we reached out to local businesses and homes to provide snacks and coffee to the staff of long term care homes. Through the amazing work of our team, we branched out and were able to start offering video call visits, letters, and activities to help keep seniors in care engaged.

Sage is a plant that grows throughout the world and has come to be associated with wisdom. It has a long history of usage in medicine and healthcare. We think that the symbolism behind the sage plant serves as a great representation of our organization and our values. Emphasizing that SAGE stands for Student Association for Geriatric Empowerment allows us to highlight our focus on wanting to increase young people's involvement in a cause that is often overlooked.



## Our Mission

To connect seniors to the wider community, to support and show appreciation for staff in long term care, and to raise awareness for issues in long term care.

# Our Team



**Rowaida Hussein**  
President



**Saloni Gupta**  
Education &  
Advocacy Director



**Vanessa  
Rezai-Stevens**  
Volunteer Coordinator



**Cynthia Nohra**  
Finances & Fundraising  
Director



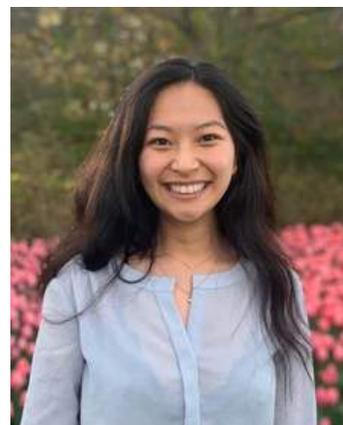
**Erin Gordon**  
Outreach Director



**Jerry Li**  
Social Media Executive



**Katharine Berardinetti**  
Communications Executive



**Lilin Tong**  
Outreach Executive



# Care Homes

Here are the long-term care homes we connected with in 2020.



**Markhaven Home for Seniors**  
Markham



**The O'Neill Centre Long-Term Care**  
Toronto



**Kensington Health**  
Toronto



**The Reikai Centres**  
Toronto



**Maynard Nursing Home**  
Toronto



**Ina Grafton Gage Home**  
Scarborough



**St. George Care Community**  
Toronto



**Allendale Long-Term Care Home**  
Milton



**Belmont House**  
Toronto

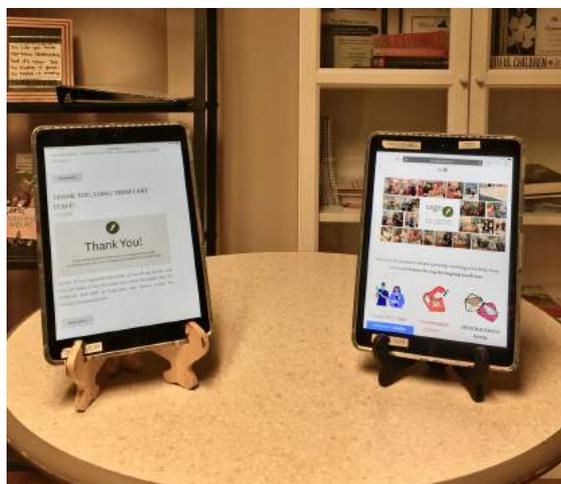
A close-up photograph of an elderly woman with short grey hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a white patterned blouse and holding a light blue tablet computer with both hands. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a library or a community center with bookshelves.

# Connecting with Seniors

We started a number of initiatives this year to connect with seniors living in long term care.

## Companion Calls

The Companion Calls project aims to connect seniors living in long term care with youth volunteers for weekly virtual meetings. During these meetings, seniors and volunteers were matched based on shared interests and cultural backgrounds. Together, they shared heartfelt moments and built new friendships. In 2020, SAGE successfully hosted over 60 Companion Calls at the O'Neill Centre, and are beginning to expand to include more homes and residents.



iPads at **The O'Neill Centre** used in SAGE Companion Calls.

# Pen Pals

Similar to our Companion Calls initiative, Pen Pals aimed to connect seniors to community members via heartfelt written messages. Letter-writers were encouraged to share a bit about themselves and their interests when writing to their senior pen pal, and included pictures of themselves, their pets, and their hobbies. We also hosted two Zoom letter-writing workshops to encourage community members to submit letters, and saw an attendance of over 65 people between both days.

We are currently in the process of receiving responses from seniors and we hope these connections will last throughout the remainder of the pandemic and beyond. In total, we sent 102 letters to 51 residents at the St. George Care Community and 51 residents at Belmont House. Along with these letters, we sent these homes care packages that included chess boards, origami sets, knitting needles and wool, activities books, playing cards, and stationery for return letters.



Delivery to St. George Care Community



Pen Pal letters and Care Packages



Delivery to Belmont House

# Bloom Together

The Bloom Together initiative was a summer project aimed at providing seniors in care with various gardening supplies to participate in a safe outdoor activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Gardening has been shown to improve the overall physical health, quality of life, social engagement, and other aspects of daily life for older adults within nursing homes. We hope that the seniors who received these items were able to decorate their home's outdoor spaces during the summer and fall planting seasons.



Delivery to The O'Neill Centre

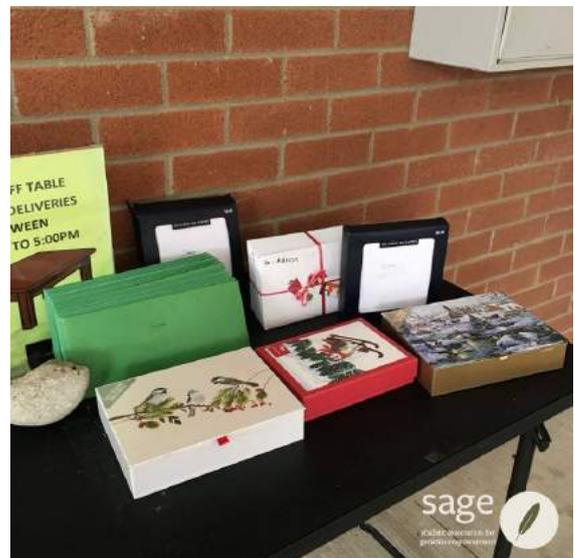


Delivery to Markhaven Home for Seniors

With the support of a grant from Rising Youth, we were able to donate \$500 worth of gardening supplies to two homes (Markhaven Home for Seniors and the O'Neill Centre), including assorted perennial and annual flowers and shrubs, soil, gardening gloves, ergonomic gardening tools, assorted planting pots and garden accessories (such as lanterns, fairy lights, wind chimes, bird feeders and statuettes).

# Community Cheer

We spread holiday cheer through the Community Cheer project, a holiday card initiative this past December. Leading up to the holidays, members of the community sent in warm wishes and New Year's messages to long term care residents through our website. On December 23rd, 2020, we were able to deliver the heartfelt holiday cards to all 173 residents at Allendale Long-Term Care Home in Milton, Ontario.



Holiday cards delivered to Allendale Long-Term Care Home.



# Supporting Care Staff

We partnered with businesses and restaurants through our Community Care initiative to provide in-kind donations such as coffee, baked goods, meals, energy bars, and personal care items as ways to energize and support our frontline heroes in long-term care.





SCENIC Coffee brownies delivered to **Markhaven Home for Seniors**



Starbucks coffee delivered to **The O'Neill Centre**



Starbucks coffee and Free Times Cafe baked goods delivered to **Kensington Health**



Red Rocket Cafe drinks and Clif Bars delivered to **The Reikai Centres**



LUSH personal care products delivered to **Ina Grafton Gage Home**



COPS coffee and donuts delivered to **Maynard Nursing Home**



LUSH personal care products and Red Bull energy drinks delivered to **Markhaven Home for Seniors**



# Educating the Community

We worked collaboratively to create a number of articles, social media posts, and infographics to educate and raise awareness for issues in long-term care and older adult health.

**COVID-19, Long-Term Care and Race**

**Supportive Housing**

**Understanding Dementia**

**Shortcomings in Long-Term Care Pt. 1 – Nursing**

**History of Nursing in Canada**

The full articles, along with other helpful resources, can be found at our website [www.sageproject.ca](http://www.sageproject.ca)

# Support

## Social & Press



**@SageProject1**  
25,042 people reached  
3,150 engagements  
209 page likes



**@sage.project**  
172 Followers



**@SageProject1**  
40 Followers



Feature in University of Toronto Arts & Science News



Feature in Toronto Life Magazine

## Grants

Thank you to Rising Youth for awarding SAGE with a \$1500 grant to help support youth-led projects during the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Volunteers

We would like to extend a huge thank you to all those who volunteered with SAGE in 2020. Our work would not be possible without your dedication and support.

**“Seniors are going through a very hard time during the pandemic and I am eager to support them, even if it makes just a small impact in their day. Prior to the pandemic, I was hoping to volunteer at a long-term care home and am grateful that I can still volunteer in a safe way with SAGE.”**

**- Shaista Mohammed, SAGE Volunteer**

Adriana Vukosich	Heather Smith	Rhidita Saha
Aisha (AJ) Rehman	Huang Jiaxin	Rhidita Saha
Alex Geiger	Irene Shin	Robert Adragna
Alison Lieu	Ishan Ghosh	Rula Doudin
Allison Alvares	Ivy Nam	Ryen Mandell
Amanda Lok	James Earl	Sabbah E-Najuf Yasin
Amelia Semenak	Jane White	Sabine El-Halabi
Andrew Good	Jasleen Gill	Sadie Landry
Angelica Acut	Jasleen Gill	Sanjay Agarwal
Annissa Ho	Jennifer Qianxi Pfeil	Sarah Moshoian
Annissa Ho	Jonah Toth	Sasha Guy
Atefeh Mohammadi	Julia Bodean	Shahd Fares
Ayana Sunami	Julia Tontodonati	Shahed Al Asmi
Ayla Dorenbusch	Kayla Raymundo	Shaista Mohammed
Carol Nassar	Lauren Mandala	Shamayal Syed
Charlotte Young-On	Leena Attyani	Shamayal Syed
Charul Narain	Lilin Tong	Shannon Snelling
Charul Narain	Lisa Crossthwaite	Shannon Snelling
Chirag Chodha	Malcolm Thompson	Shawna-Lynn Russell
Courtney Cathcart	Maryam Fakri	Sheng Han Li
Dashreen Sanghera	Michael Adragna	Shira Levine
Diana Nakib	Michael Smith	Slaghaniya Neupane
Dorota Borovsky	Mike Hawk	Stephanie Cook
Dorota Borovsky	Mila Valcic	Stephanie Houvardas
Eliora Wee	Mohamed Hussein	Su Topaloglu
Ella Han	Moqadas Mian	Supriya Agarwal
Ella Robson	Munima Munadeen	Sydney Wright
Emily Wuschnakowski	Naomi Lee	Thilaanee Krishnamoorthy
Emma Dalton	Natalie Lung	Thurkkha Lingam
Erin Zikos	Nathaniel Green	Tolu Ogunfowora
Eva Gajic	Negeen Katirai	Tran Thai
Faguni Gupta	Olivia Kellner	Victoriya Kozhemyakina
Faye Varanesi	Omer Hussein	Yi Yang
Gautham Nair	Parul Agarwal	Yiwen Li
Grace Hodgson	Raghad Alareibi	Zi Xuan Zhang
Graham Taylor	Ray Jin	
Hannan Abdalnassir	Rei Bajraktari	

# Feedback

“Our staff extends their thanks and appreciation for your generous support. We are grateful [for] the SAGE team for the work you are doing for the community.”

**Laurie McClelland, Director, Fundraising & Volunteers, Markhaven Home for Seniors**

“During the summer months The O'Neill Centre received a generous donation of gardening supplies for our residents from SAGE. Also during this time, U of T student Vanessa Rezai-Stevens facilitated virtual connections for our residents. The special SAGE Companion calls allowed for an intergenerational program that all residents enjoyed. In addition, the partnership has helped combat social isolation during these hard times. On behalf of the O'Neill team we thank you Vanessa and the SAGE Project and we look forward to future endeavors.”

**Jordana Yacob, Programs Manager, The O'Neill Centre**

“I've been interested in increasing awareness and bringing about change to elderly care in Canada. I thoroughly believe that the work that SAGE has done has brought about much joy to residents and staff at long-term care homes and that in and of itself can improve elderly care.”

**Alison Lieu, SAGE Volunteer**

“Markhaven is lucky to have beautiful outdoor spaces for our residents to enjoy. Thank you [SAGE] for the donation for our residents to help keep their “green thumb” going. Gardening has been a huge part of some of our residents lives, the ergonomic garden tools that Bloom Together donated will help our residents continue with their love of gardening”

**Lindsay Bailey, Recreation Manager Markhaven Home for Seniors**

# Thank you for supporting SAGE in 2020!



## Special Thanks To

Franco Taverna  
Jordana Yacob (The O'Neill Centre)  
Barbara Michalik (The Reikai Centres)  
Kayla Johnston (The Reikai Centres)  
Lindsay Bailey (Markhaven Home for Seniors)  
U of T Lions Club  
Circle K International U of T  
Pencils of Promise U of T  
Jonah Toth  
All Long Term Care & Frontline workers



**Student Association for  
Geriatric Empowerment**  
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