



October 21, 2022

## **Ontario Health Coalition Announces Our Highest Awards for 2022: This year's recipients have shown extraordinary commitment to safeguarding public health care and advocacy for long-term care residents and their families**

Toronto – They contributed in unique ways, but each demonstrated extraordinary commitment to the public interest, the Ontario Health Coalition reported as it announced the winners of its highest awards. The awards celebrate the contributions of Ontarians who have made a remarkable contribution in public health care.

“This year we have faced enormous challenges in public health care. Each of our award winners have given extraordinarily of their time and effort in the public interest. They are beacons of hope. It is our honour to have worked with them and supported their efforts,” said Natalie Mehra, executive director of the Ontario Health Coalition.

### **The Ethel Meade Award awarded to [Rabbi Shalom Schachter](#), Toronto**

Ethel Meade was a long-standing advocate on health care issues. She was the Vice Chair of CareWatch (a home care advocacy group), a founder and chair of the Ontario Coalition of Senior Citizens' Organizations, a founder and co-chair of the Ontario Health Coalition, a member of the Seniors' Secretariat and the Ontario Association of Social Workers Committee on Issues of Aging, among many others. Her knowledge of the health system was encyclopaedic and she was consulted by governments at the municipal and provincial level, as well as by professional and community organizations, regarding the development of public policy in her areas of particular passion, including home and community care.

The Ethel Meade Award was created upon Ethel's retirement from the Ontario Health Coalition Board of Directors and is given to the person whose research and/or policy work has made a crucial contribution to the public health care system and the fight to protect it.

The Ontario Health Coalition is pleased to name Rabbi Shalom Schachter as the recipient of the Ethel Meade Award. Shalom is an executive member of the Interfaith Social Reform Alliance Coalition and has had a successful career as a lawyer. He is active in his faith community and has, for decades, advocated for improving long-term care. Shalom's research truly has contributed to advancing the public interest. He calculated the data for a seminal report on death rates in for-profit long-term care homes compared to non-profit and public homes after the first wave of the pandemic for the Ontario Health Coalition. From his work with us, media chains created their own databases and began to track this vital information, resulting in major change in media and public understanding of the impact of privatization in long-term care, and fundamentally changing the dialogue and policy options considered on this issue. Recently he helped calculate hours of care in Ontario's long-term care homes from survey data across Ontario showing that care levels have not improved despite many promises by the Ford government. Shalom has spent many hours researching, giving advice and support, writing up his findings, helping to educate community groups, faith communities, politicians and others. We are deeply grateful for his exceptional expertise and commitment.

**The Daniel Benedict Award awarded to Barb Hogg & Brit Hancock from the Guelph Health Coalition; Linda Mackenzie-Nicholas from the Northumberland Health Coalition; Mary-Jo Nabuurs, Michelle Robidoux & Julie Perl**

**from the Greater Toronto Health Coalition; Jim Stewart and the Waterloo Health Coalition; and Matthew Gventer and Joan Jardin from the Kingston Health Coalition.**

Daniel Benedict was awarded the Order of Canada in 1998 for his many contributions for social justice, public health care, justice for seniors, workers' rights and education, and as a tireless advocate in the cause of international solidarity and global equity. He served as co-chair of the Ontario Health Coalition and was a founding member. He also served on the boards of a number of large seniors' organizations in which he was a leader in the struggle to safeguard public health care, improve community and long-term care, and stop cuts and privatization. Dan spoke seven languages, had a Doctorate in Economics, and made inspiring contributions to workers' education in Latin America and in Canada. He is remembered around the globe for his contribution to social justice in America, Latin America and Europe.

The Daniel Benedict Award is given annually to the person or persons who - working with one of the local health coalitions – best embodies Dan Benedict's spirit of extraordinary community activism and commitment to the protection and extension of Public Medicare.

Barb Hogg and Brit Hancock are the co-chairs of the newly formed Guelph District Health Coalition. They have stepped up and led the fight to protect public health care in their community, building a new regional health coalition, spending hours learning the issues, tirelessly engaging in public education and advocacy, driving across the counties in the region delivering information and public education, attending events, doing outreach and working with local media. Brit also advances at every opportunity the equity issues impacting persons with disabilities. Barb has a huge sense of community responsibility and compassion, and brings that to all the aspects of her work. Both of these women have shown truly remarkable commitment to safeguarding and improving health care in their community.

Linda Mackenzie-Nicholas is the chair of the Northumberland Health Coalition. She has dedicated her whole life to educating and advocating for social change and improved conditions for health care workers and patients. She has helped to stop cuts to local hospital services, and throughout the pandemic has led regional work to improve care and conditions in long-term care. Linda designed and developed a major survey which she organized to have distributed to long-term care staff across Northumberland, Peterborough, the Kawarthas and Haliburton on conditions in long-term care homes. She organized the regional release of a major report based on the surveys, advocating for improved care levels. She has tirelessly led the fightback against the privatization of health care in Northumberland.

Mary-Jo Nabuurs, Julie Perl and Michelle Robidoux are members of the Greater Toronto Health Coalition. They have organized and attended numerous rallies and protests to improve care in long-term care. Mary-Jo has led movements to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and protect the public. Michelle has not only done weekly public market tables, developed public education and advocacy materials, and organized people to join in the fight to protect public health care and stop privatization, but she has also been instrumental in advocating for abortion rights, peace and social justice. Julie has been tireless, advocating for her mother and all Ontarians in long-term care to address the care crisis. She is always there, always exceptionally helpful, engages her family council and others, and speaks out with remarkable courage.

Jim Stewart is the chair of the Kitchener-Waterloo Health Coalition. He has led community organizing and advocacy to improve public health care and stop privatization. He has inspired and organized dozens of pop up events, organized a truly impressive team of organizers and advocated to stop the privatization of the local hospitals. His hard work, leadership, skills and commitment are truly exceptional and have helped local health coalitions all across Ontario.

Matthew Gventer and Joan Jardin are leaders in the Kingston Health Coalition. They have hosted events three times a week at busy intersections across Kingston for months. Their commitment to educating and organizing

the Kingston community has been unflagging. They have worked to defend public health care, organized public meetings and events on the care crisis in long-term care, helped to conduct local actions, held press conferences and referendums to stop privatization and cuts, wrote articles, conducted public outreach and developed really exceptional public education and advocacy materials.

**The Orville Thacker Award awarded to Bonnie Roe, Haliburton Long-Term Care Coalition; Helen Lee, Halton Health Coalition; and Dr Vivian Stamatopoulos, Toronto advocate for the elderly.**

Orville was deeply committed to social issues affecting Canadian families, and in particular, seniors. He was a member of Ontario Health Coalition and a founder and co-chair of Kitchener Waterloo Regional Health Coalition. He was a veteran, active in the legion, a tireless political campaigner and a stalwart advocate for social justice.

The Orville Thacker award recognizes exceptional commitment and contribution to improving quality public health care for the elderly in Ontario. It is awarded to a person or organization whose voluntary contribution supports the fundamental principles in the Canada Health Act - principles of fairness, equity and compassion - that underlie Public Medicare in Canada.

Bonnie Roe is the chair and founder of the Haliburton Highlands Long-Term Care Coalition and has been a formidable force in protecting public health care and in particular, long-term care residents in her community. She has organized a very active and effective local coalition, met with local politicians, developed petitions garnering thousands of signatures to improve long-term care, organized and attended countless events to highlight the care crisis in long-term care, and much more. Her commitment to her community is truly extraordinary.

Helen Lee was the chair of the Family Council at Mon Sheong and has long been an exceptional advocate for rights for the elderly and long-term care residents. Helen's grandmother died in long-term care after contracting COVID-19. Helen is active in the Chinese community and has worked tirelessly to educate and spread awareness among the family councils and Chinese community about conditions in long-term care. Helen has helped to organize surveys about conditions of living and care, organized public advocacy events several times per week in Halton, did outreach to family councils and an array of organizations to get them involved. Helen cares deeply about the elderly and about our public health care system and has given of her time, her exceptional talents and her heart to help.

Dr. Vivian Stamatopoulos is an extraordinary advocate for the elderly, particularly in long-term care. In her professional life, she has conducted a major new study on family caregivers. After her grandmother died just prior to the pandemic in long-term care, like the other awardees, Dr. V, as she is affectionately known, became an effective spokesperson calling out the poor conditions of living and care. She is indefatigable, working daily to push issues and pressure politicians. She has organized families and been their voice. Fearless and relentlessly honest, Dr. V's contribution to the struggle to protect and improve care, and stop privatization, has been truly exceptional.

It is our privilege to recognize these remarkable people. They are heroes in our province and we are proud to work with them.