LIVING CLASSROOM

Media Relations Guide for Partner Organizations

From the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging (RIA)
Communications Team

RIA Schlegel-UW Research Institute *for* Aging

cesba

Why Media Coverage Matters

Positive media coverage of the Living Classroom helps to shape public opinion and inform the community about this innovative program. It can also foster public support for this government funding initiative, making it easier to gain traction and secure continued participation.

Telling Your LC Story

Watch for and identify key story lines in your LC journey:

Telling Your LC Story

- **Student Perspectives:** Their “aha!” moments, surprising discoveries in their learning, personal growth, or their new passion for caring for older adults.
- **Resident Perspectives:** How the students bring joy, fun, new learning opportunities, and comfort to the residents.
- **Staff Perspectives:** How the program helps staff, provides mentorship opportunities, and enhances the care environment with greater skills.
- **Intergenerational Connections:** Heartwarming stories of seniors teaching the students life lessons, students introducing new technology or perspectives to the residents.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Telling Your LC Story

- **Addressing Workforce Shortages:** How your program directly contributes to a skilled and compassionate care workforce in your community.
- **Innovation in Education/Healthcare:** You can share your Living Classroom as an example of a forward-thinking model for training and care.
- **Community Building:** How your partnership strengthens ties between educational institution and long-term care home, creating a richer and more tightly aligned community.

UNIQUE ASPECTS

Telling Your LC Story

- **Innovative Methods:** Is there anything different or special about your Living Classroom that is worth sharing? What does your LC look like and how is that set-up the ideal delivery for your community?
- **Demographic Focus:** Are there any special considerations within your program, such as particular cultural needs met, or improved recruitment within an underserved area?
- **Milestones:** Celebrate and share milestones within your program with your local community, providing a great chance to demonstrate the value of your LC. This could also be a time to talk about challenges you've overcome.

Making Your Pitch

A media pitch is a concise, persuasive email or phone call designed to pique a journalist's interest. Here are the main components:

- **Compelling Subject Line:** Short, clear, and compelling.
- **Personalization:** Address the journalist by name if possible.
- **Strong Hook:** Get straight to the most newsworthy or heartwarming aspect.
- **The Story Angle:** Briefly explain what the Living Classroom is and why it's relevant to their audience. Please don’t forget to include the funding acknowledgement.
- **Why Now?:** Connect it to a current event, season, or milestone if possible.
- **Offer "Assets":** Interviews, photo opportunities, access to the site, testimonials.
- **Call to Action:** What do you want them to do? (e.g., "Would you be interested in a site visit next week?").
- **Your Contact Information:** Aways make it easy for them to reach you.

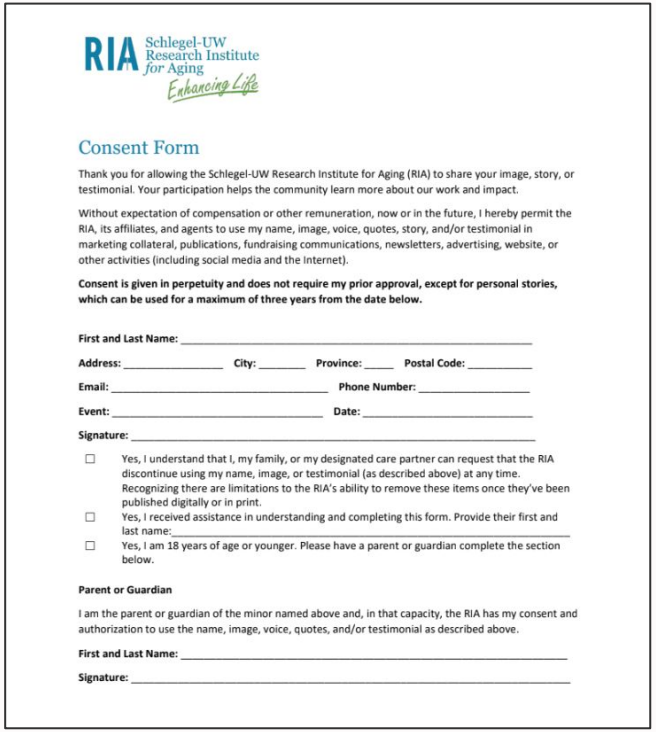
Gathering Your Assets

Not every story will need all of the assets listed below but the more prepared you are with these, the easier it will be to secure that media coverage.

- **High-quality photos and videos:** Capture students interacting with residents, the LC in action within the LTC home, unique activities. Ensure you have proper consent forms signed for everyone identifiable in photos/videos. See next page for details.
- **Quotes/Testimonials:** Get compelling quotes from students, residents, family members, staff, and program administrators.
- **Key facts and statistics:** Program start date, number of students, number of residents impacted, any measurable outcomes (e.g., increase in resident participation in activities, student graduation rates).
- **Boilerplate and Funding Acknowledgement:** A short paragraph about your educational institution and long-term care home. Please include the LC Funding Acknowledgement.

Consent Forms

- Any photos or videos that are shared with a media outlet will need all people in them to sign consent forms.
- The media outlet will likely provide their own version of a consent form to you.
- On the right is an example of the RIA's Consent form.



RIA Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging
Enhancing Life

Consent Form

Thank you for allowing the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging (RIA) to share your image, story, or testimonial. Your participation helps the community learn more about our work and impact.

Without expectation of compensation or other remuneration, now or in the future, I hereby permit the RIA, its affiliates, and agents to use my name, image, voice, quotes, story, and/or testimonial in marketing collateral, publications, fundraising communications, newsletters, advertising, website, or other activities (including social media and the Internet).

Consent is given in perpetuity and does not require my prior approval, except for personal stories, which can be used for a maximum of three years from the date below.

First and Last Name: _____

Address: _____ **City:** _____ **Province:** _____ **Postal Code:** _____

Email: _____ **Phone Number:** _____

Event: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature: _____

☐ Yes, I understand that I, my family, or my designated care partner can request that the RIA discontinue using my name, image, or testimonial (as described above) at any time. Recognizing there are limitations to the RIA's ability to remove these items once they've been published digitally or in print.

☐ Yes, I received assistance in understanding and completing this form. Provide their first and last name: _____

☐ Yes, I am 18 years of age or younger. Please have a parent or guardian complete the section below.

Parent or Guardian

I am the parent or guardian of the minor named above and, in that capacity, the RIA has my consent and authorization to use the name, image, voice, quotes, and/or testimonial as described above.

First and Last Name: _____

Signature: _____

Engagement and Follow-Through

- **Be Prepared:** Have your spokespeople ready. Ensure the LTC home staff and residents are aware and prepared for a potential media visit.
- **Provide Visuals:** Offer to provide high-resolution photos and video clips, or invite them to capture their own.
- **During the Visit (if applicable):**
  - Designate a main contact person for the journalist.
  - Ensure quiet spaces for interviews.
  - Have key individuals available.
  - Offer a quick tour.
- **After Coverage:**
  - **Thank the journalist:** Send a simple, sincere thank you email. Keep them in mind for future stories.
  - **Share the coverage:** Post the article/segment on your website, social media, and in internal communications. Share with the CLRI. Celebrate the success!

Thought Leadership

With your Living Classroom program you are creating an innovative way to grow a larger skilled workforce of PSWs and strengthen the delivery of compassionate care in LTC homes. Isn't that worth sharing?

Besides specific coverage opportunities, faculty or staff involved in the LC with expertise in senior care and/or intergenerational learning could also be offered as expert sources for general stories.

The media can be a source of positive publicity for the educational institution and LTC provider - and support the recruitment of students, staff, and LTC clientele.

Funding Acknowledgement

Please request that the funding acknowledgment be included in the publication, whether it is radio, print, or digital news. It is important for the ministry to see this inclusion.

Full version:

The Living Classroom program is funded by the Government of Ontario and led by the Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging (RIA), in partnership with the Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators (CESBA).

Short version:

This project is funded by the Government of Ontario and led by the RIA, in partnership with CESBA.

CLRI Media Support

Earlier we talked about when you are proactively looking for media coverage. If the media reaches out to you, and you feel that you need more communications support, the RIA Communications Team can help.

If you receive a media request and need support, please contact the person within your organization who is leading the administration of the Living Classroom and have them reach out to the RIA at: media@the-ria.ca and cc: Patty Attwell at patty.attwell@the-ria.ca. In that email, please include details of the request, including: media outlet, reporter, story topic, people requested.

Bonus Tips and Tricks

How to get the most out of your media initiative

Breaking Down Your Plan

- **Develop Your Story:** Begin with a rough outline, then draft a pitch of the highlights.
- **Key Messages Timing**: What to communicate, and when, for maximum impact (news cycles, milestones).
- **Spokespeople:** Identify and prepare the right people for maximum credibility.
- **Media Targets and Relationships**: Identify media/journalists you want to reach and cultivate a plan for the most appropriate outreach.
- **Develop Content and Assets**: Create informative/compelling supporting material, photos, etc.
- **Owned Media Plan**: Don’t forget to leverage your own in-house channels, and CLRI’s.

Key Messaging Timing

Timing: For maximum impact, time your key messages to align with media and audience interest. Consider the factors below to maximize impact:

- **News cycles:** Aligning your pitches with current events or trending topics related to aging.
- **Celebrating milestones:** Announcing significant events that have meaning to your community.
- **Awareness months/days:** Leveraging relevant national or international days related to aging, health, or something else that your community culture highlights.
- **Seasonal relevance:** Tailoring messages to specific times of the year that might impact older adults, where you can be thought leaders in the conversation (e.g., flu season, summer heat).

Ways to Tell Your Story

Creating compelling and informative materials makes it easier for the media to cover the story and for the audiences to understand the message.

Examples of some types of content you might consider using:

- **Press Releases:** Announcing the launch or other milestone regarding your LC.
- **Media Advisories:** Alerting media to upcoming LC events or opportunities for interviews.
- **Fact Sheets:** Providing concise background information on your LC initiative.
- **Expert Bios:** Highlighting the credentials and expertise of your agreed spokespeople.
- **Q&A Documents:** Anticipating and answering potential media questions.
- **Op-Eds and Articles:** Offering a story or expert commentary on how your LC improves the community, student learning, and care.
- **Blog Posts:** Sharing LC insights and updates directly on your own website.
- **Social Media Content:** Engaging with the public and media on your social platforms.

Owned Media Plan

This focuses on the communication channels that your organization directly controls, which can be used to amplify your media relations efforts and reach many of your key audiences directly.

Examples of key owned media channels:

- **Websites:** Your central hub for information relevant to your stakeholders.
- **Blogs:** Share insights, expert commentary, and updates on your LC program.
- **Social Media Platforms:** Get the word out and engage on your own social channels.
- **Email Newsletters:** Distribute updates and milestones to targeted subscribers.
- **Annual Reports and Publications:** Showcase the LC in action and what the program brings to your organization in terms of forward-thinking initiatives.

Pitching Stories to Media

- Write in a journalistic style so they can print “as is”.*

*Most media outlets are stretched thin, with fewer journalists than they have space to fill each day. If you provide them with a well-written article, rather than a typical press release, you may find they print it verbatim.

This model allows you full control of the narrative - just remember that the article must not sound like an ad, it needs to sound like a neutral but well-informed journalist wrote it.

Make the Most of Social Media

Remember to plan amplification of your coverage through your own social platforms, and those of your partner organizations.

- Share coverage and ask partners to like or share.
- Tag journalists and media outlets in your own posts.
- Create shareable visuals where possible.
- Respond and engage with comments on your post's feed.
- Include influencers/ambassadors in your posts where possible (well-known faculty, health care professionals, LTC leaders, popular residents).
- Ask your employee networks to consider liking and sharing this content.

Best Practices for Messaging

Try to always be clear, concise, and warm in your tone for this type of media outreach. This is not academic to academic - make it easy for a general audience to understand.

- Use person-centred language.
- Tell a story when possible, rather than just reporting facts (unless you are providing an FAQ or Media Alert).
- Remove overly industry-centric language, use layman's terminology.
- Use quotes and examples where appropriate.
- Provide any necessary extra background information in a separate paragraph at the end, as notes for the journalist.

Examples of Previous Living Classroom Media Coverage

Here are links to just a few examples of the media coverage our LC partners have earned

The Belleville Intelligencer:
https://www.intelligencer.ca/news/loyalist-psw-students-get-hands-on-learning-in-living-classroom

Barrie Today:
Living Classroom provides 'gateway' into health-care careers - Barrie News

CTV News:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=es4Cwqx1stA

The Sudbury Star:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=es4Cwqx1stA

Wellington Advertiser:
Living classroom' to provide students with front-line health care experience

New PSWs cross the stage at Carrefour Options+ adult program

Program taking applications for new students for fall 2025

Sudbury.com Staff
Jun 26, 2025 9:00 PM

Carrefour Options+ and Villa St-Gabriel Villa celebrated this year's five Personal Support Worker (PSW) program graduates on June 18. | Supplied

'Living classroom' to provide students with front-line health care experience

School board-county collaboration could bolster local health care rosters

Advertiser Staff | July 15, 2025 @ 5:23 pm | News

A collaboration between Upper Grand District School Board and Wellington County is expected to provide up to 21 students with real-world experience inside the Wellington Terrace Long-Term Care Home over a 10-month period. Pexels stock image

WELLINGTON COUNTY – Secondary school students will soon have the opportunity to get front-line health care experience with local seniors.

A collaboration between Upper Grand District School Board and Wellington County is expected to provide up to 21 students with real-world experience inside the Wellington Terrace Long-Term Care Home over a 10-month period.

Coined a "living classroom," chosen students would work alongside health care professionals, interact with residents and apply their newly learned skills, according to a county press release.

Students would complete the program with a personal support worker, first aid and gentle persuasive approach certificates, as well as secondary school credits.

Wellington Terrace administrator Suzanne Dronick said students will develop critical skills and the compassion required to care for the terrace's residents through hands-on experience and mentorship.

Loyalist students shuttle to living classroom at H.J. McFarland

Administrator | Apr 08, 2025 | Comments 0

Students from Loyalist College's Personal Support Worker (PSW) program are participating in a hands-on learning experience developed in partnership with H.J. McFarland Memorial Home.

The initiative is an ongoing partnership between the college and H.J. McFarland Memorial Home, with plans for additional cohorts of PSW students to benefit from the community-based learning model in the future.

The long-term goal is to encourage students to transition from temporary work-study placements to long-term employment in County health organizations.

"The Living Classroom model brings education directly into the workplace," explains Loyalist College Senior Vice President, Academic and Chief Learning Officer Dr. Amanda Baskwill. "Students are connecting their theoretical knowledge to the lived realities of long-term care residents, their families and the health care teams that support them. Working alongside professionals in their field, our students are gaining a greater understanding of the day-to-day responsibilities of PSWs and witnessing compassionate care in action."

Each Wednesday morning students travel from Loyalist's Belleville campus to Picton using the HealthPULSE shuttle, (Partners United in Local Solutions for Everyone) to help remove transportation barriers for students completing placements in the region.

Health PULSE is a collaborative network composed of leaders from Loyalist College, Quinte Health, Belleville, Quinte West, Hastings County and Prince Edward County, established to help advance innovative solutions to local health care challenges.

The Living Classroom is outfitted with equipment provided by Loyalist College, and a new hospital bed provided by H.J. McFarland Memorial Home.

School board PSW training

Helping to fill gaps in long-term care

By Anita Plunkett

Personal support workers (PSWs) have never been more needed in Ontario's long-term care sector. With increasing demand for qualified workers, CESBA – the Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators – has been at the forefront of tackling the critical shortage of PSWs through school board PSW training programs.

Thanks to recent funding from the Ontario government, CESBA is leading three innovative initiatives that aim to train, recruit and retain PSWs in long-term care while also highlighting the unique benefits of school board-run PSW programs.

The value of school board PSW programs

PSW programs run through Ontario's school boards stand out for their high quality and accessibility. Available at over 40 sites across the province through more than 20 school boards, these accredited programs cater to diverse learners and provide hands-on practical learning. Offered in both English and French, the program is currently free until March 2026. Flexible learning options, such as part-time classes and night school, make it easier for students to participate.

Additionally, students can choose to work toward earning their Ontario Secondary School Diploma and access wraparound supports, including ESL classes and assistance from guidance counsellors.

These programs meet stringent government training standards and are subject to a robust quality assurance process, overseen by third-party auditors, to ensure compliance. Courses are delivered by qualified nurses, many of whom are also certified teachers. Graduates of school board PSW programs are highly skilled, career-ready and in high demand by employers.

For more information about school board PSW programs, visit getmypsw.ca. For Living Classroom, visit livingclassroom.ca. To learn more about CESBA's PSW projects or to book a Coffee Chat with a PSW Champion at your long-term care home, contact PSW@cesba.com.

CESBA-led projects supporting PSW training

PSW Career Navigator Project

The PSW Career Navigator Project aims to support PSW careers in long-term care. Regional PSW Champions engage learners enrolled in school board PSW programs with in-person presentations and information sessions to talk about their own experiences and to highlight the many benefits and rewards of working in long-term care. The Champions also host "Coffee Chats" at long-term care homes to connect with staff and create a culture of support and positivity within the PSW profession.

PSW Engagement Strategy Project

The Engagement Strategy Project focuses on increasing awareness of health care careers and training opportunities offered by school boards to secondary school students, particularly those enrolled in their school's Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) – Health & Wellness program. Through workshops, job fairs and information sessions led by regional PSW Champions, students are introduced to how PSW training can be used as a foundation to other health care careers such as nursing.

The Champions encourage students to take advantage of co-op placement and volunteer opportunities in long-term care, and help them discover career bridging options and the financial supports available. Students are also able to take micro-credential training in infection control, feeding and medical terminology to better support their experiences in co-op placements in long-term care as well as fulfil their Specialized High Skills Major (SHSM) program requirements.

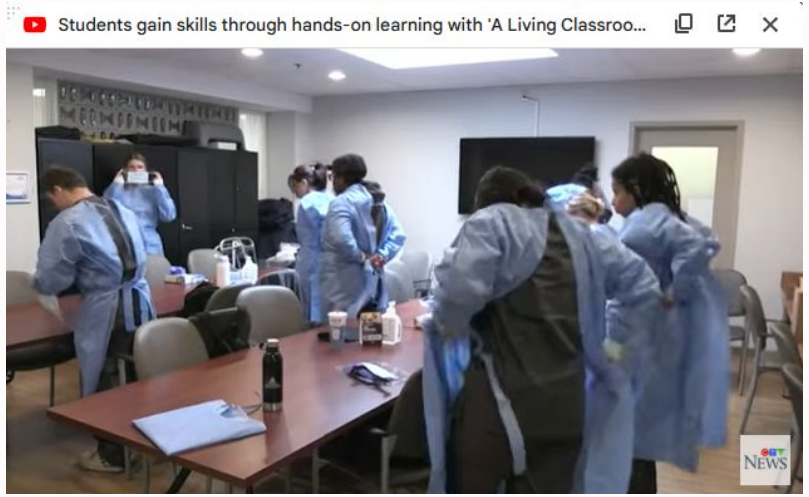
To appeal to youth, the Champions hand out fun branded swag that promotes the GetMyPSW.ca microsite, a landing page that features frequently asked questions about school board PSW programs and an interactive map to find local training programs. Through these efforts, CESBA is helping to ensure that PSW careers are highlighted as a viable and rewarding option for youth and adult learners alike.

Living Classroom in Orillia a 'gateway' into health-care careers

'They are seeing that it's real. It takes the textbook learning and puts it in the forefront of hand-on learning right away,' says official of program at Trillium Manor

Nikki Cole
May 23, 2025 1:30 PM

Zoe LeBlanc, 20, a personal support worker student through the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board's new Living Classroom, is seen with Trillium Manor resident Lynn Arsenault in Orillia. | Gisele Winton Sarvis/OrilliaMatters



Now is the Time to Share Your Living Classroom Story

Remember, if you need support, reach out to the RIA at: media@the-ria.ca and cc: Patty Attwell at patty.attwell@the-ria.ca