

February 2023

Dear Member of the Legislative Assembly,

Happy Therapeutic Recreation Awareness Month! Every February across Canada, and right here in Alberta, we celebrate the role **Therapeutic Recreation professionals** play in supporting individuals in their health care journeys.

Recreation Therapists are allied health professionals who work in various settings, including but not limited to older adults, children and youth, community, rehabilitation, mental health, addictions, and education. **Recreation Therapists use recreation, leisure and play as treatment tools to help Albertans achieve and sustain their highest level of independence, wellness and quality of life.** They promote participation in healthy leisure towards preventing overall functional patient decline so Albertans can live at home for as long as possible or with a high quality of life in residential care settings. Additionally, it facilitates the practice of skills in real-life situations in the community, assisting the individual in maximizing independence.

These health care professionals assist patients in developing physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual health and wellness. Research shows the benefits of engaging in meaningful leisure for one's holistic health. Using a person-centred approach, they ensure therapy is based on who they are to ensure successful outcomes. **In short, therapeutic recreation provides patients the opportunity to move beyond their illness and flourish.**

Recreation therapists work in both urban and rural settings throughout the health care system continuum, including acute care, rehabilitation (physical and mental health/addictions programs), community, home care, supportive living, long-term care, adult day programs, and private practice.

Since 1985, the Alberta Therapeutic Recreation Association (ATRA) has represented recreation therapists across the province. ATRA is a member-driven association representing over 700 professionals dedicated to promoting professional therapeutic recreation services for Albertans with physical and mental illness, aging and disabling conditions.

Recreation therapy is a growing profession in Alberta. As it grows as a critical component of health care in the province, ATRA continues to drive professional development, setting standards of practice towards ensuring consistent practice across the province, and is looking to advance recreation therapy by seeking improved oversight through regulation.

Thanks for your joining us in celebrating Recreation Therapists. We would be happy to provide more information on Therapeutic Recreation in Alberta or answer any questions you may have concerning the profession.

Sincerely,

Bev Suntjens, President
Alberta Therapeutic Recreation Association