



Message from the CEO, Raymond Swonek

It's been a very special year for GEF Seniors Housing as we celebrated our 60th anniversary in 2019!

Looking back over the past year here at GEF, my fondest memories are of our people – the time we spend together and the work we do every day to make a positive difference in the lives of all our seniors.

We created the **Client Services portfolio** that will help us improve access to supports and services for seniors, and provide them a better overall quality of life. We changed the funding model for the Community Support program so it will be paid for from the Quality of Life fund, including laundry revenue generated from GEF communities.

GEF achieved its tenth year as a **Best Small and Medium Employer (BSME) in Canada**, with an overall engagement score of 83 per cent. We continued in our commitment to training, health and safety throughout GEF by giving all new employees a comprehensive, one-week orientation so they can begin working safely as soon as they arrive at their home site. We are also providing training for all staff on how to recognize and deal with challenging behaviours.

We held our most financially successful **Building for Life Breakfast fundraiser** ever, with more than \$100,000 in net proceeds raised. These monies will help support our Quality of Life Fund.

Earlier this fall we held our 12th annual **Great Knitting Giveaway**, celebrating more than 120 of our seniors. Together, this talented group hand-knitted or crocheted more than 7,000 items like toques, scarves, mitts and socks, for eight local charities, including those supporting low-income families, adults and seniors mostly in the inner city.

It's important to us to ensure our tenants, residents and staff are as informed as possible, so we introduced **digital signage** at Sakaw Terrace this year, and are planning to expand that to all of our 11 GEF lodges.

We **upgraded flooring, paint, soft seating and décor** in five of our lodges, to make them more attractive and comfortable for our residents and staff. The team did great work, and we'll do more in 2020.

We started redevelopment of the **Lauderdale Homes** site and held two rounds of public consultations. We will hold a third round of consultations early next February.

Looking ahead to 2020, I believe what continues to set GEF apart is the way we live out our values every day. I wish you and your loved ones much joy, peace, health and happiness in the coming year!



The Great Knitting Giveaway

As we marked our 60th anniversary as GEF Seniors Housing, we also celebrated the 12th Annual Great Knitting Giveaway. Held on Friday, October 25th at the Santa Maria Goretti Centre, the event was a huge success and our biggest yet! When the event started in 2007, we had 35 tenants and residents participating. This year, there were more than 120 knitters contributing to this amazing event with more than 7,000 items knitted, crocheted and donated with love and passion.



This event has grown exponentially thanks to the enormous generosity and kindness of Edmontonians, who together donated well over 100 bags of yarn just this year alone. That amount translates into thousands of skeins of yarn for our tenants and residents to knit their beautiful creations. Without the generosity of all our GEF seniors, this event wouldn't be possible. We cannot thank them enough for their countless hours of working on these amazing handmade items, each of them created with so much love.

The charities we choose to receive the knitted items also play a huge part in this event, and some of them have been with us since



the very beginning. This year, we chose eight charities: Crystal Kids Youth Centre; Edmonton Emergency Relief Services Society; Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers; Operation Friendship Seniors Society; SNUG; Ronald McDonald House Charities Alberta, Terra Centre and The Mustard Seed. The items knitted for these charities will provide warmth and comfort to their clients during the cold winter months, and a hug whenever they feel a little sad or lonely. These items will remind them that they are cared for and loved, regardless of their situation.

No matter the charities or the circumstances, our knitters are dedicated to making a difference. They work continuously to put love and warmth back into the Edmonton community, and their generosity will touch thousands of lives of people they have never met.

GEF Trishaw bicycle at Zoominescence



On Sunday, December 1, some of our GEF Seniors Housing residents took in the beautiful sights of Zoominescence at the Edmonton Valley Zoo through a different lens – on a Trishaw bicycle!

Zoominescence is a spectacular exhibition of artistic light installations within the Zoo grounds, and GEF partnered with Age-Friendly Edmonton to bring in our own Trishaw, a specialized three-wheel bike piloted by a trained volunteer, that gives older adults the experience of “wind in their hair” without having to drive a bike themselves.

Find out more about the GEF Trishaw and see more beautiful photos from Zoominescence on our blog page at gefcommunityconnections.com/blog.

Stocking stuffers for seniors

This year, GEF Seniors Housing has once again partnered with a campaign that is close to home. Stocking Stuffers for Seniors is an annual donation drive that aims to bring cheer and help to approximately 4,000 lonely and isolated seniors. The act of receiving gifts helps to significantly improve the spirits of a senior.



Started and organized by London Drugs and in partnership with Operation Friendship Seniors Society four years ago, this campaign has grown bigger than anyone could have imagined. What started in just Edmonton has now grown to many communities in Northern Alberta and has reached across Western Canada. This campaign helps remind seniors that someone out there cares for them.

"I have been a long-time admirer of the work Operation Friendship Seniors Society does for our inner-city seniors in Edmonton," said Natalie Harper, Stocking Stuffers for Seniors Program Co-organizer, London Drugs. "In 2015, I reached out to Jimmy Morrison, their community relations supervisor, to see if there was anything London Drugs could do to help their seniors during the holidays. He told me their stocking sponsor could not afford to support

them that year, so we decided it would be a great time to pilot a program to support them at the store in Oliver Square. The good people of Edmonton ended up supporting all 350 of their clients that year, as well as 150 packages for their drop-in centre. As a result, we expanded the program, and now we have other amazing partners such as GEF Seniors Housing. We couldn't do this without the amazing work being done to support it by our partners like GEF, as well as many others. And of course, this would not be possible without the generous support of our customers."

This holiday season, from November 18th to December 16th, head to your local London Drugs and take a tag with a senior's wish list from the tree. From there, simply fulfill the items on the list and bring them back, unwrapped, to the location where the tag was selected. Items that are most often on seniors' wish lists include blankets, warm clothes like gloves and scarves, slippers or socks, paper towels, tissues, toiletries, chocolate and candies. Your gift will bring so much joy and create a special memory for a senior this Christmas season.

Did you know?

GEF Seniors Housing is a registered charity. We are the largest provider of subsidized seniors' housing in Edmonton.

We gladly accept donations to support our capital building projects and programs that enrich the lives of our residents and tenants.

To make a one-time or ongoing donation, please visit our website at gef.org and click on the "Donate Online" button.



Welcome Home

- Accommodation for adults age 65+
- Affordable rent based on your income
- 31 apartment buildings
- 11 lodges with meals, housekeeping, and recreation activities
- Clean, well maintained, secure buildings
- Friendly, professional staff
- Easy access to public transportation

To request an application package, or for more information, please call **780.482.6561**, email housinginfo@gef.org or visit gef.org.



Good turnout for second round of Lauderdale Homes redevelopment community consultations

More than 30 residents from the surrounding Lauderdale community turned out recently for the second round of consultations on GEF's proposed redevelopment of Lauderdale Homes.

Residents looked at three different ideas for redevelopment of the current complex of six duplex units. Proposals include a 24-unit bungalow complex, a 30-unit bungalow-plus-two-storey complex, and a 38-unit bungalow-plus-three-storey complex. Each of the proposals would include a combination of one- and two-bedroom suites.

"GEF Seniors Housing communities are a part of the larger communities where they're located," said Doug Kitlar, Director of Facility Management, "so it's really important that we hear from our neighbours about what they would like to see – or not see – in a new building development. We've received some great feedback so far, and this will be factored into our final design that we'll take back to the community for their input next spring."

Even after the community consultation phase is complete, there are still several steps to take before GEF can break ground on the new development. The property needs to be rezoned and there will be several months of detailed design and engineering. All current Lauderdale tenants need one year's notice and then everyone has to be relocated - some may choose to temporarily move to another GEF

We welcome your feedback!

Do you have a question about GEF Seniors Housing, or a suggestion for a topic you'd like to see covered in a future issue of Community Connections? Please let us know: communications@gef.org

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community for the duration of the rebuild. These tenants will also have first choice of the new suites when they're ready.

The third round of public consultations will be held on Monday, February 3, 2020 before we begin the detailed design phase.

We are hoping to break ground on the redevelopment in 2021 and open the new Lauderdale Homes community in 2022.



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