

FOCUS

SPRING/SUMMER 2021



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Essential Caregivers Make our House Feel like *Home* Again

From the time family access was restricted in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Jill and Joan Vanderkooy used many of the connection tools made available by the recreation staff. Video calls, window visits and then outdoor visits once the weather became nice all helped keep families together. "Mum figured out Facetime really quickly and it was so reassuring for both of us to connect every day," said Jill Vanderkooy.

September 2020, the Government of Ontario began allowing Essential Caregivers to help with care tasks, including but not limited to emotional care, feeding, toileting and daily exercise.

"After months apart, it is such a joy to be able to spend time together again," shares Jill.

Spending a few hours with her mum 4-5 days a week, Jill is happy to comply with all requirements to enter the home. "The mask and shield don't even feel like a hindrance anymore. I was happy to be getting the nasal swabs every week (and thankful we were able to be tested on site) and feel even more security now that we all have a rapid test every time we come. Having access to my mum again is the greatest privilege on earth."

Like Jill and Joan, Emily Harshaw and her mother Esther missed each other dearly. "I told Mum every day that my hand was always holding

hers and my heart was always with hers, but I couldn't wait for the day we could be together," shared Emily.

The fear for her mother's safety when the pandemic started was strong, but Emily was quickly and frequently reassured by communications and safety measures put in place by Belmont management and staff. "Their hard work and dedication to every Resident's well being is so evident. I knew my mum was as safe as possible and I am so thankful for the transparency and openness of the management team through this entire year."



Esther and Emily love to read, spend time outside and chat with all their Belmont friends.



Jill and Joan are so thrilled to be able to spend time together again!

When Emily became an Essential Caregiver, life got closer to normal. They enjoy walks outside in the Belmont gardens, reading books together and, like Jill, Emily helps with many care tasks for her mum which helps provide relief to nursing staff.

"Through the pandemic we have unfortunately had many of our part time staff members get full-time positions at other homes, so having some additional help from Essential Caregivers makes a big difference. We are truly a village," says Donna Locke, Director of Care.

The Belmont House family is so much bigger than just those who live here. We are so glad to have our home full again!

There's Always Something to Celebrate

By: Ann Katrusiak

Chair, Belmont House Foundation Board of Directors

C OVID-19 certainly came as a shock to us all. We are now just over a year into battling a virus that was supposed to only keep us all home for a few weeks. Looking back at this time last year, I am astonished at how much we have come through together as a community, and how much all our supporters have made possible.

While reflecting on 2020, I am filled with so

much gratitude. It was one of the most difficult years, yet one of the most successful fundraising years in the Belmont House Foundation's 28 year history! Our incredibly generous family of donors really came together to help us keep Belmont running as smoothly and safely as possible.

When we needed to have shipments of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) sent from overseas, you were there. When we were uncertain about government support, you were there. When we needed to hire additional staff to help fill in gaps, you were there. Your support lifted our spirits and buoyed our strength. Your generosity has made a truly meaningful difference and we are so grateful for every person who donated (both monetary and gifts of PPE), sent words of encouragement, and provided meals and snacks for staff.

As my time as Chair of the Belmont House Foundation Board of Directors comes to an end in June, I want to say that I have been so blessed to be a part of this community, both as a member of the board and as a daughter of a Resident. I have the great privilege of seeing the work of Belmont House from multiple sides and feel so grateful to be a part of it.

Thank you to everyone who has given so generously, you make our work possible.



Zera Gifford and Megan Marchitto pose with one of our (smallest) mountains of Personal Protective Equipment

The Bloom Project

When thinking of Spring, what comes to mind? Is it the smell of rain? The extra hours of sun? For all of us at Belmont House, thanks to the generosity of Kathryn Siddall, it's blooming daffodils!

"COVID-19 has brought so much hardship and change for so many of us," shared Kathryn. "My Grandma always said flowers are for the soul and I try to buy them every week to brighten the energy in my home."

While on one of her trips to the flower shop with her son in February, Kathryn noticed that daffodil plants were available, and they decided to buy a few and deliver them to neighbours

who had been isolated.

"It was such a small token but brought much surprise and joy. I knew I had to grow it into something bigger and began raising funds with my kids. We set a goal to buy 150 plants and with the generosity of our community, we have raised enough to deliver 1,000 plants to seniors!"

In addition to the flowers, children in the community have created beautiful homemade cards to accompany the plants filled with drawings and inspirational messages.

Knowing Belmont House by reputation, Kathryn along with her children Riley and Sloane, delivered 250 daffodil plants and cards on March 9th that



Investing in Upgrades for our Home

With strong infection control procedures in place we are now taking time to focus on some much needed repairs and capital upgrades around the Belmont House campus in 2021.

While unable to venture out into the community, Residents and Tenants have been spending lots of extra time in the gardens of Belmont. Daily exercise, chats with friends and time with family have centered around the Belmont grounds more than ever and we are committed to maintaining the most beautiful and safe space possible for everyone.

"I enjoy being out in the garden as much as I can especially when the weather is nice," shared Tenant Elizabeth Yarnell. "It's perfect for quiet reading, getting some exercise or having a nice chat with my friends. I have even been known to doze off from time to time. It's just so peaceful!"

High traffic areas such as the Stillman Garden need a releveling of the paver stones. Over time, the ground has shifted and there are some uneven areas, creating a possible hazard for folks enjoying a stroll.

Today, we are turning to you to help us make some much needed improvements around our home.

This summer we will be releveling the concrete pavers as well as some other capital upgrades including replacing some flooring in the Walker Wing, bathing rooms and our main kitchen as well as upgrading our generator system. These necessary capital upgrades are unfortunately not covered by government funding, rent or copayments and so we are turning to you, our generous community to help us out once again to ensure we can offer the very best for everyone at Belmont House.

Will you make a generous gift today?

By gathering together, we can give the gift of fuller, healthier and safer lives for everyone who lives at Belmont House. Please feel free to use the enclosed postage-paid envelope to make a caring gift, make a secure online gift at bit.ly/supportbelmont or call our Fund Development Officer, Deanna Codner directly at (416) 964-9231 ext.238. **Thank you!**

were delivered throughout the home to Residents, Tenants and Staff, ushering in the new season and bringing new joy.

"It was so nice and thoughtful. Everywhere you go now, there are lovely, blooming daffodils to make us smile," says Tenant Barbara Darling.

The daffodil bulbs will be planted by our wonderful gardener so we all can enjoy them for years to come!

"I want Residents and Tenants to know that they are special, and we care about them," shared Kathryn and her children Sloane and Riley dropped off 250 daffodil plants.



The Best Possible Start to the New Year

2020 ended with the brightest light!

Health Canada approved the Pfizer BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine on December 9th and Belmont House staff began receiving their first dose on December 15th. The Moderna vaccine was later approved on December 23rd and our retirement home was then chosen to be part of a vaccine rollout pilot project and Tenants were able to receive their first dose of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine on December 31st.

Gail Walker, Belmont's Director of Retirement describes December 31st as "overwhelmingly exciting and full of hope. We were honoured to be chosen to be the one of the first retirement homes in the province to receive vaccines. After months of worry and anticipation there was finally a light at the end of a very long tunnel. It felt so surreal."

Just a few days later, a team from University Health Network (UHN) arrived to vaccinate Long Term Care Residents and with assistance from Belmont staff, were able to vaccinate all Residents who had consent in just 45 minutes!

"This is the biggest step forward," said Medical Director, Dr. Bradley Birmingham. "We have put so much effort into ensuring the safety of our beloved Residents, and of each other. The war against COVID-19 is not yet won, but victory is



Resident Edward Grandfield happily waited for his shot knowing it is his best defense against COVID-19.

now within reach. We know that vaccination, together with all the infection prevention we have in place, will get us to the finish line."

Working with UHN, we were able to secure doses of the Moderna vaccine and were overjoyed by the excitement of getting Essential Caregivers vaccinated on-site at Belmont House!

After months of uncertainty, we are all hopeful and looking forward to life getting closer to normal.



We were thrilled to host UHN's #TeamVaccine at Belmont to help vaccinate Long-Term Care Residents against COVID-19

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A newsletter for donors and friends of Belmont House

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Belmont House is operated by a volunteer Board of Directors licensed by the Ministry of Long Term Care, the Retirement Home Authority, and operates under a service agreement with Ontario Health.

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