



OUR VISION

A society where everyone belongs.
A society where everyone is valued.

November 2024

Dear Friend,

Thirty-five years ago, I walked through the doors of Community Living Toronto to apply for a job.

I was new to Toronto from Cape Breton and searching in this huge city for the same kind of close-knit community I had grown up with.

One of the people interviewing me asked, “What do you do for people with intellectual disabilities where you’re from?”

I was a bit confused, and I answered, “We don’t really talk about anyone like that – ‘people with intellectual disabilities.’ They’re simply ‘my friend’s brother.’ Or ‘my boyfriend’s sister.’ Or ‘the man who lives up the street from us.’ They’re a part of our community, and we care for them the same way we care for each other.”

Thirty-five years later and I can say resoundingly that, **in Community Living Toronto, I found exactly the kind of loving, supportive community I’d been seeking.** A place where the concepts of “belonging” and “home” matter more than anything.

It’s a community that you play an incredibly important role in.

Now, as I’m approaching the 35th holiday season that I’ve spent at Community Living Toronto, I’d like to tell you what the holidays are like in our homes. I think it will give you a great peek into the kind of belonging that you help create, with every gift you give.

And I’m hoping that I can inspire you to consider making a special holiday donation. You’ll be helping our community to celebrate the holidays – and you’ll also be helping us to keep these homes open and safe.

Every gift – of any size at all – will make a real difference.

Perhaps this is even the right time to consider giving your support monthly? A modest monthly donation really adds up to have great impact over the year.

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Many of our residents are aging and your gift can help us make sure we can keep them in their home for as long as possible.

I can tell you from first-hand experience that many of our homes really need a lot of work to keep people not just housed, but “homed.”

“Homed” means a place that is safe, warm, comfortable and more than anything, secure.

You see, Community Living Toronto made the decision long ago to buy houses that we could find funds for. To continue providing more housing options, we support people to have very long-term leases on homes of their own.

We did this so that people would be guaranteed stability and feel the security with knowing they have a home ... The security that comes from knowing the rents can't be raised dramatically and force us to leave ... Knowing that they can't be evicted or renocted.

Our homes provide people with the higher level of support that they need – either permanently or during a time when they're really struggling to live on their own.

The other really important thing to know is that we have a growing number of people who are in their 80's, or even 90's.

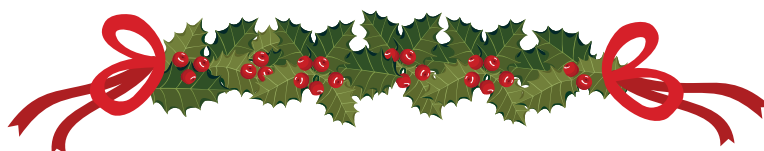
This was unheard of when I first joined the organization. But we've worked hard to make sure that we don't have to move people out of the houses that have become their homes – the homes they've grown to love – just because they are getting older.

Don't we all want our elders to be able to stay at home as long as they possibly can? Instead of ending up in a hospital that they never leave again?

And as our seniors are less and less able to go out – particularly in winter with ice and snow – we want their homes to be as cozy, welcoming, and enjoyable as possible.

Sometimes our staff have even added sensory elements to their rooms – lighting or music or art to soothe them.

Of course, as people reach their senior years, this means they have higher mobility needs, and they may have medical complexities. Both of those things come with their fair share of costs.



Whether it's elevators or ramps, stair lifts, porch lifts, or accessible decks so that they can still enjoy going outside and access their communities – these expenses really do add up.

We have some older houses that only have deep bathtubs which many seniors can't get into safely. So we're doing a lot of bathroom renovations, including fitting them with showers that a shower chair can roll into.

And often we even have to redo the doorways – because they were built when there wasn't a requirement to be comfortably wide enough for a wheelchair or walker.

If you think about it, all of the things that you might do to make your home safe and comfortable for your family – we are hard at work doing for ours.

Which brings me back to the holidays. Because we're also hard at work getting ready!

Our staff are fantastic at celebrating the different holidays that come at this time of year. Decorating, planning dinners and treats – and talking with people's families to make sure that everybody is included, and everybody feels loved.

We open up our homes to families – whether that's their parents if they are still with us, their siblings, cousins, or perhaps nieces and nephews. It's lovely to see how proud everyone is to introduce us to their families.



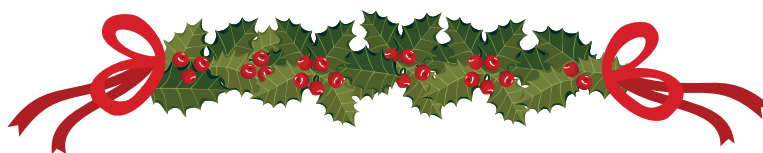
The holidays are a chance for our group home residents to celebrate with loved ones and their neighbours.

And, of course, our staff keep a caring eye on those people who don't have families – or who won't have any visitors of their own over the holidays.

Last year, somebody dressed up as Santa and the gift-giving was truly a joy to watch. In fact, we were so rowdy that a neighbour popped in and said, "I heard so much laughter, I needed to find out what was going on in here!" And, of course, we invited them to join us!

We come up with fun activities and think of a special something for each person – something that is meaningful for them.

That might be a sports event, or a concert, some winter clothes, or a video game system they can share with the whole house, or something just for their room like a fun lamp or poster.



The staff put a great deal of thought into these gifts, because we know they'll bring happiness for a long, long time.

It's truly a joyous time to be part of this family.

And even though you're not there, my friend, your presence and your kindness is felt.

I hope I've painted you a picture of what the holidays are like at Community Living Toronto. And how your gifts help us create a little magic.

I also hope I've given you a little insight into the challenges we are facing keeping our homes safe and secure.

If I have, will you consider joining me by putting aside a gift for to help people we support this year?

As I mentioned before, the gift size really doesn't matter.

Every donation goes a long way in helping Community Living Toronto fill some of the gaps in making sure our housing meets the needs of people.

And if you think you'd like the convenience and budget-friendliness of monthly giving, a donation each month is a great way to help us through the year.

It's truly up to you. And it doesn't matter which way you prefer to give.

What matters – like in all families – is all of us coming together to create something meaningful through kindness and caring.

This is the unique magic I've only experienced at Community Living Toronto.

The magic which happens when everyone can look around a room and feel ...

I belong.

Once again, thank you for your loyal, generous support. And thank you for being a member of this family.



Best wishes for a warm and wonderful holiday season,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "MacNeil".

Frances MacNeil
Senior Director, Supported Living



P.S. If you take a moment to think about the things that have the most meaning for you during the holidays, I can guarantee you we're trying to create our version of exactly those same traditions and personal touches here at Community Living Toronto. I'm deeply grateful to you for any gift you can send to help us keep the magic of the season alive. **Thank you.**