

## Be a Santa to a Senior aims to collect gifts for more than 100 York Region residents



This is a time of giving and seniors and community members alike are teaming up to help make this holiday season brighter for seniors in need.

Be a Santa to a Senior is back in full swing and this year organizers aim to mobilize the community to collect gifts for more than 100 York Region seniors who may not otherwise have a gift to open.

If you're interested in picking up one badly-needed item for a local senior, it's as simple as heading to Sunrise of Aurora (3 Golf Links Drive) or Sunrise of Richmond Hill (9800 Yonge Street) and taking a look at their Christmas Trees.

On each tree through December 13 are numerous ornaments featuring the name and desired gift of an older adult and shoppers can buy the requested gift and return it wrapped or in a gift bag to Sunrise with the ornaments attached.

“The last few years have been really difficult and isolating because of the pandemic,” says Home Care consultant Mariam Khalid. “Through this program we're just hoping the community can band together and make this holiday really special and use it as an opportunity to give a gift to adults who might not otherwise have family or feel alone during the holidays.

“This year it might be a little challenging given the times we're in, costs are rising, and it has been a little challenging so we're not sure how many [donations] we're going to get. Sunrise puts up trees that have gift requests that seniors usually ask for, things like toiletry sets, blankets, gift cards for groceries and things like that.”

The gift requests, notes Khalid, are based on needs and what people are actually going to use. Since they've coordinated the program, she says asks have remained pretty much the same, but this year might be a little more difficult with rising costs. But Sunrise was happy to hop on board with the initiative once again this year.

“For us, this is a wonderful way to give back,” says Michelle Zullo, Director of Sales at Sunrise Aurora. “Our staff love seniors, they have a passion for seniors, and just making sure that every senior feels loved and safe and making sure that their dignity is intact. If we can give them a small comfort of home by giving them something as basic as a blanket, like toiletries, because a lot of these seniors are perhaps coming from lower income areas, some are in hospitals and they just can't? it's something we're very happy to be a part of.”

Sunrise residents, she added, have been especially happy to lend a hand to seniors in the community who might be less fortunate because they are very well aware of how lucky they are to be in a community that is truly home, where they feel loved and safe.

It's a period of joy, says Khalid of the holiday season, and that's usually the association, but it's very important to also keep in mind that there are seniors out there who may not have loved ones anymore, they may have families who are far away, and it's a time of year for profound nostalgia and loneliness for some people. Just that little bit of giving a gift not even the gift itself, but the thought, that they were thought about, they were remembered and appreciated.

For more information, visit [BeaSantatoaSenior.ca](#).

By Brock Weir  
Editor  
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter