

Kingsway Place takes resident to the edge ? the Edge Walk, that is



Aurora's Irene Surgenor doesn't shy away from a challenge.

Now in her 90th year, the resident of Kingsway Place Retirement Residence on Murray Drive is still beaming from ear-to-ear after getting a bird's eye view of the City of Toronto after taking on the CN Tower's Edge Walk. Now, she's looking forward to the next thrill to mark her milestone birthday next July ? whatever that might entail.

?I told my kids I would like to go for a glider ? I just dropped the hint,? she says with a laugh.

It's either that or zip-lining.

For her, doing the Edge Walk was a matter of crossing an item off her own ?Bucket List? and was a dream that was made possible thanks to the care and organization of Kingsway staff.

Helping organize the trip was Andrea Lee-Han, Recreation Director for Kingsway Place, who was joined on the excursion by staff colleagues Jacqui Holmes and Gayle Palmer.

The seed of the trip to the Toronto landmark was planted by fellow Kingsway Place resident John Tettman and, once it germinated, it turned into an all-hands-on-deck effort from the team to make it happen.

?I started to do a bit of research and found a 98-year-old lady who actually did it twice with her great-grandchildren, so I thought, ?Okay, this might be a good thing. We can probably do this,' and our Executive Director said to go for it,? recalls Lee-Han. ?When I put posters up, people were like, ?Are you serious? We're doing this?' Yep, we were doing it. We had never done anything like this before and we were really gung-ho on going for it and we're so glad we did it.?

?Oh, I was always gung-ho,? adds Irene, ?because it was something different. It was a challenge to me, something on the bucket list. I wanted to jump out of a plane and do skydiving before, but they said I couldn't do it because I had broken bones below my waist ? unless the fellow I'm on his back can put his legs down first!?

Irene might have been gung-ho, but she was initially concerned her occasional fear of heights would kick in. Thankfully that didn't happen, and when she stepped out into the fresh air from the safety of the CN Tower, she was greeted with ?a beautiful morning, the

sun was shining, there was no wind, the lake was calm, and it was just beautiful.?

Originally hailing from Belfast, Northern Ireland, she moved to Canada in 1953 ? to a very different iteration of Toronto and, from on high, it was a very different view than the one that first greeted her when she settled.

The sight of condos was not necessarily on the bucket list, but the thrill of the excursion won out; and for Kingsway, that's really what it is all about.

?It was something different and outside my normal realm of existence, and my husband and kids were shocked I was going to do it ? I was surprised at myself, really,? says Palmer. ?I thought if Irene could do it, I could do it, and I was going to do this for myself. This was very important to us.?

Adds Holmes: ?I didn't think I could do it, but I pushed myself. Standing next to Irene, I thought if I can't do this and Irene can, that's no good, so I pushed myself and the feeling of exhilaration and accomplishment when you have done something like this was fantastic. This might be a retirement residence, but it doesn't all end when someone moves in here. We have so many events that Andrea organizes and it is amazing.?

For Lee-Han, it's all about the experiences.

?Maybe it's something you didn't have time for when you were bringing up a family, or maybe even finances. It was great to see our community come together and that's what I want to see. I want to put Kingsway on the map!?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter