

Seniors need so little, but that little goes a long way: Wish Association



By Brock Weir

Seniors need so little, but they need that little so much, says Ingrid Davis of the Senior Wish Association. But those who have what they need have little hesitation with helping their peers who might not be so lucky.

This a trend Ms. Davis has found as the Aurora chapter of the Senior Wish Association heads into its third season. The past three years have been ones of significant growth for the volunteer organization and, significantly, this holiday season will be their first of the Adopt-a-Floor program.

In this fledgling initiative, local retirement residences, including Aurora's Hollandview Trail Retirement Community, have pooled their resources to buy special gifts for each resident of specific floors at Southlake Village, the Newmarket nursing home affiliated with Southlake Regional Health Centre.

?I am very excited about this because it shows just a real concern, especially at this time of year, when we realise how grateful we are for everything and part of that includes reaching out to others who do not have what we have ? and there are a lot of them,? says Ms. Davis. ?Even in an affluent town like Aurora, there are those who are forgotten and very lonely at Christmas. It is just amazing that these residents of a more well-to-do retirement residence are looking out for the needs of others.?

These needs can be surprisingly simple.

This year, Ms. Davis and the Senior Wish Foundation are working with a new partner in Chartwell Aurora (formerly Aurora Resthaven) and all community gifts received during this season will go directly to their long-term care residents.

Helping in this endeavour include not only the public at large, but ?incredible support? from the Rotary Club of Aurora, the Aurora Seniors' Centre, and Hollandview, who are keen both to help and to keep the money and other donations local.

?It just shows that Aurora is so supportive of our own and that is why it is just such a pleasure to have this charity operating in Aurora so we can really help our residents and support everybody,? says Ms. Davis. ?What is very exciting is up until this year, nurses and staff at Chartwell would buy gifts themselves for the residents, or some of the families were asked if they could bring a little bit extra for some of the residents who don't have gifts. This year we can just show Chartwell Aurora the incredible community spirit and how others are thinking of seniors at Christmas, supporting them, and the nurses and staff get support as well.?

Among the items on the Chartwell wishlist this year include colourful cushions to brighten up their rooms, small pictures and prints

to decorate their walls, large print books, crossword and word search books, calendars with big pictures, photo albums, socks, scarves and costume jewellery for women, sugar free candies, and small blackboards for writing messages and notes for themselves and visitors.

“They don't have a big space to live in, so they just need small things, but pretty things to look at, and little indulgences that they may not have enough money to afford on their own,” says Ms. Davis. “Many of them don't have families who come to visit and, being in a long-term care residence, they don't necessarily have a lot of money to be able to afford things.”

As the Senior Wish Association is, as the name suggests, a wish-granting organization, operations continue year-round, but are particularly active in the winter and Holiday season. Recently, an area transport company donated a bus to take students from Highview Public School to a long-term care residence in Richmond Hill to perform a Christmas concert.

They also plan to collaborate once again this February in crafting Valentine's Day cards for seniors in care and ramp up their efforts to amass volunteer visitors.

Members of the community have also come forward with their suggestions on how to help, including one local family with six children who have taken it upon themselves to create a Christmas stocking for one male and one female resident in long-term care.

“Our pleasure will be in sharing the true meaning of Christmas with our family,” they said. “We choose to remember those older than us out of respect for their contribution over the years to family, work and society. We recognize that those older than us are often forgotten and we want them to know that we will take them forward with us.”

If any families are interested in following their lead, Ms. Davis says she would be happy to facilitate a connection.

The Senior Wish Association can be reached via their website at www.seniorwish.org, email at ingrid@seniorwish.com, or by calling 905-717-0135.