YOUR IMPACT

SUNNYBROOK VETERANS CENTRE

Fall 2021

The largest Veterans' care facility in Canada, Sunnybrook's Veterans Centre is home to more than 300 Veterans of the Second World War, the Korean War and the Cold War. Your generosity allows us to offer a variety of programs that keep our Veterans engaged, active and connected.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our world, it has been more important than ever to protect the physical and mental health of our Veterans. Thank you for giving back to the men and women who offered so much during previous times of need in our country.

300+
Veterans in our care

72
wishes granted in the past year

10
years of Operation Raise a Flag

Celebrating a decade of success for Operation Raise a Flag

Since 2010, Sunnybrook's Veterans Centre has marked Remembrance Day by raising a sea of Canadian flags.

Every year, hundreds of volunteers have assembled to plant thousands of small Canadian flags outside the Veterans Centre, honouring the legacies of Canadians who have served at home and around the world.

By its tenth year, Operation Raise a Flag raised $677,541 (as of October 2020) with more than $150,000 raised in 2019 alone.

Although pandemic safety measures prevented volunteers from gathering in 2020, Operation Raise a Flag proceeded with Sunnybrook staff and members of the Canadian Armed Forces stepping in to raise the flags in time for Remembrance Day, while observing hand hygiene and physical distancing guidelines.

Harry Gower's tree of thanks, with leaves added by residents that depict what they are grateful for

KEEPING VETERANS HEALTHY AND ACTIVE DURING COVID-19

The safety and well-being of our Veterans is at the centre of everything we do. As the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our community over the past year and a half, we have been taking all necessary steps to keep our Veterans healthy.

Within rigorous safety measures, the Veterans Centre continues to facilitate engaging activities as well as virtual and physically distanced social interactions. These modified programs have been integral to helping our Veterans feel connected and supported during these challenging times.

Uniting in song

Residents of our Veterans Centre recently joined music therapist Trish MacAulay for a hopeful, modern take on a classic Vera Lynn song.

Although visitors are currently restricted to ensure the safety of our residents during the COVID-19 pandemic, our Veterans continue to enjoy opportunities for social interaction, physical activity and engagement through unit-based programs and therapy services. Through engagement in music, horticulture and the arts, creative arts therapies have been shown to improve the well-being and quality of life of our residents.

To reduce risks, these activities are held in small groups, while ensuring proper physical distancing and frequent hand cleaning.

Virtual volunteers

Coogee, an Australian labradoodle, and her owner, Maureen Harvey, have been beloved volunteers at the Veterans Centre since 2019. With her friendly presence, Coogee is a source of joy for many of our Veterans. When the pandemic brought strict visitation guidelines in early 2020, Coogee was no longer able to enter the L-Wing.

But safety precautions did not prevent Coogee entirely from visiting. Instead, the Veterans Centre quickly transitioned to virtual sessions between Coogee and the residents with the help of an iPad.

Coogee's virtual visits remain a highlight for Veterans. Although on a screen, seeing a furry volunteer still puts a smile on many of the residents' faces and brightens the days of Veterans, staff and volunteers.

Growing a tree of thanks

As an interior designer, resident and Second World War Veteran Harry Gower outfitted embassies in Africa and around the world. He was recently seen doing the same for the Veterans Centre during his art therapy group.

Harry's art was brought to life as he and other Veteran residents added their own leaf to the tree he painted in order to celebrate Thanksgiving and all that they are grateful for.

Spotlight on: Grant a Wish Program

The Grant a Wish Program is a cornerstone of the personalized support we provide to every resident at the Veterans Centre. Veterans receive three wishes in the form of experiences, objects or events that hold special meaning to them.

Last year, we granted 72 wishes to our residents, made possible by the gifts of donors and community sponsors like you. Wishes bring excitement and surprise into the lives of our Veterans. Here is one Veteran's story about the impact of the program.

UNFORGETTABLE TRIP

One Veteran's Grant a Wish experience

A family trip to the CN Tower left a lasting impression on Richard Lake.

It numbers among many highlights of a storied life for the 95-year-old resident of Sunnybrook's Veterans Centre. A diesel electric mechanic for the Royal Canadian Air Force's Western Air Command during the Second World War, Richard ran a power plant and maintained generators on an air force base on Vancouver Island. He travelled from Toronto shortly after he enlisted at age 19.

"Even though he has short-term memory loss, he remembers the visit," says Terry Rutledge, the youngest of Richard's three daughters.

Richard never stopped smiling, from the moment Terry's youngest son travelled with him by bus from Sunnybrook to the CN Tower. It was Thanksgiving weekend in 2019, and a turkey dinner with a view was waiting at the top.

The trip was enabled through Sunnybrook's Grant a Wish program, supported entirely by donors. "When he first heard about the Grant a Wish program, he said he didn't need anything," recalls Terry. "We came up with the idea when we realized he had never been to the top of the CN Tower."

Terry couldn't believe the puff of steam they first saw across the lake: it was Niagara Falls. "We had the perfect opportunity to show my dad all the neighbourhoods he had lived in and around Toronto."

Richard and his daughter Terry at the CN Tower

As the restaurant rotated, Terry pointed out West Hill, where Richard was born; Oshawa, where he grew up; downtown neighbourhoods where Richard rode his bicycle as a young delivery boy for a butcher shop and grocery store; the Masonic Temple at Yonge and Davenport, the ballroom where Richard met his soul mate Audrey just after the war; Keele St. and the 401, where Richard built a house in the 1950s; Birch Cliff, near Scarborough Bluffs, where he lived as a child; and St. Catharines, across the lake, where Richard and his wife of 60 years eventually retired.

"It brought back so many memories," says Terry. "We reminisced and reviewed his whole life."

OUR THANKS TO YOU

It is our priority to ensure our Veterans have the best possible quality of life. Through engaging programs, unforgettable experiences and personalized care, we bring comfort and safety to our Veterans.

We couldn't do it without your support. Your generosity allows us to give back to our Veterans after all they have done to serve our country. Thank you.

Sunnybrook
FOUNDATION

2075 Bayview Avenue, KGW-01
Toronto, ON M4N 3M5
foundation@sunnybrook.ca
Phone: 416-480-4483