

The SOCIETY Scoop

Greetings from our President and CEO, Abby Katz Starr

While most people think of the new year in January, I have always found that September carries its own sense of renewal. The crispness in the air, the return of routines, and the quiet shift from summer's pace invite both reflection and anticipation. Families adjust to back-to-school schedules, the Coptic Orthodox community marked their new year, Nayrouz on September 11, and for me, personally, Rosh Hashanah is a deeply meaningful time of introspection and renewal.



At Unionville Home Society, this season also marks fresh beginnings. Partnerships with York and Seneca are resuming after the summer pause. We are excited about the launch of our newly redesigned website, along with a companion mobile application that may already be live by the time you read this.

We also welcome our new UHS Board Chair, Philip Enright, who shares his greetings in this issue. Preparations are underway for our much anticipated annual Dinner Party, in early November, and ahead of that we look forward to Seniors Fall Fest Week, and our SALC Fair on October 1—an event that brings together seniors and community partners to spotlight all the resources available.

This time of year reminds me of the importance of pausing before moving forward—of acknowledging the year that has passed, and the growth still ahead. Like the spirit of Rosh Hashana, it is a season to seek renewal, to heal, and to strengthen our bonds with one another. In community, we are able to carry more, to do more, and to become more. With our staff, our partners, families, and our residents, we form a strong and vibrant community here at Unionville Home Society. As autumn unfolds, I hope it offers you moments of reflection and preparation for the months ahead. I look forward to sharing more of the exciting initiatives and milestones to come.



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A message from UHS Board Chair

Ongoing tariff disputes, world conflicts and economic uncertainties have darkened horizons recently. But here's some good news: the campus of senior care at UHS is thriving and making a positive difference, every day, in the lives of our most cherished and vulnerable family members.

As the newly appointed Chair, I want to confirm that our Board of Directors is committed to providing the guidance and support necessary to fulfil our vision of a progressive community where older adults thrive, age well and live better.

Our outstanding staff including care providers, administrators, the senior management team and countless volunteers all pull together, in these challenging times, to serve the residents, clients and their families with the best quality long term and senior care. In recent years we have become innovators and leaders in dementia care. Our staff are being educated, trained and certified in advanced *DementiAbility* methods. The capital "A" emphasizes the focus on our residents' abilities rather than the deficits that accompany the condition: it makes a world of difference. We continue to partner with the health faculties at York University and Seneca Polytechnic to implement innovative measures that enhance elder care.

Visit Wyndham Gardens, Union Villa or any of our day/community programs and you will see the engagement of our staff, volunteers and residents. You will also see a lot of smiles!



Like all not-for-profit organizations, we face challenges ahead. Behind the scenes, your volunteer Board wrestles with budget, fund-raising, building renovations, land development and various governance issues that are all part of making our campus of care the very best it can be. It is my privilege to chair the Board in the days ahead.

Happy Fall, Philip Enright



Volunteer Spotlight

Unionville Home Society Welcomes Co-Op Students in Meaningful Roles

Unionville Home Society is proud to partner with local high schools through the Co-Op Student Placement Program. This past spring, we welcomed seven students from four schools into diverse roles across our Long-Term Care Recreation, Adult Day Program, Nursing, Environmental Services, and Community Centre for Seniors departments.

These placements offer students hands-on experience, helping them explore career paths they may not have considered, while enriching the lives of our residents and clients with their fresh perspectives.



Claire, a student placed at the Unionville Community Centre for Seniors, shared:

“I had the incredible opportunity to build connections, develop leadership skills, and give back to the community in meaningful ways.”

She organized Rising Stars, a student-led performance event featuring singing, dancing, and live music that brought joy to seniors and participants alike. Claire has since joined our team through the Canada Summer Jobs program.



Juan, who worked in Environmental Services, reflected:

“My time at UHS helped me grow more confident in my abilities. I met great people who were supportive and patient as I learned and improved.”



In our Nursing department, Yanny gained valuable insight into healthcare:

“Pursuing this path requires genuine commitment and a desire to make a difference. UHS motivated me to continue in healthcare and apply the experience I’ve gained.”

While past placements focused on recreational activities, we’re now seeing a shift toward more direct healthcare roles. Our Volunteer Coordinator, Cynthia Li notes:

“The program gives students early exposure to long-term care, helping them build communication and teamwork skills. Many leave with a clearer sense of direction, greater respect for seniors, and a strong interest in healthcare careers.”

As we begin our Fall 2025 placement program, we’re excited to mentor the next group of young leaders and continue fostering meaningful connections across generations.

For more information on our Volunteer and Student Placement Program, contact us at (905) 477-2822 ext 4262 or by email at volunteer@uhs.on.ca

Empowering Seniors Care: Union Villa And York University Join Forces

A transformative partnership to support staff, engage students, and enrich the lives of residents

Union Villa Long-Term Care is proud to announce an exciting new collaboration with York University's School of Health Policy and Management, led by Dr. Tamara Daly, Dr. Lora Appel and Dr. Lianne Ginsburg. This strategic partnership brings undergraduate students into our care environment to actively support and enhance the implementation of the DementiAbility Methods.

Beginning in early October, Union Villa representatives will visit York University to introduce students to our home, our care philosophy, and the values that guide our work. Shortly after, students will tour Union Villa to

observe our environment and gain firsthand insight into dementia care in practice.

In early November, we are honoured to welcome Professors Daly, Appel and Ginsburg to Union Villa, where they will lead four remote focus groups with our Nursing and Recreation teams. These sessions will gather valuable feedback on the implementation of DementiAbility, helping us refine our strategies and further empower staff to embed this approach throughout our home.



Advancing Our DementiAbility Certification Journey

In alignment with Section 16.1 of the Support for Seniors and Caregivers Act, 2025, Union Villa is committed to establishing a comprehensive and organized program of dementia care and services. Building on early research conducted with Seneca Polytechnic, we adopted the DementiAbility Methods as our model of care, one that promotes meaningful engagement, supports personal identity, and reduces responsive behaviours.

Currently, our Buttonville Home is undergoing certification, with the goal of expanding this across all home areas to become a fully DementiAbility-certified long-term care home.

This partnership with York University ensures that our training efforts are not only delivered but also rigorously evaluated and sustained. It moves us beyond compliance toward a transformative culture shift, embedding a philosophy of care that truly enhances the quality of life for residents living with dementia, while also supporting their families and caregivers. Stay tuned for more in future Scoops!



Menu Fest: A Celebration of Taste and Choice for Residents

Union Villa recently hosted a vibrant and flavourful event called Menu Fest, a special dining experience designed to engage residents in shaping their culinary future.

The afternoon of September 19th in the Heritage Lounge at Union Villa LTC was filled with delicious aromas and lively conversation. Residents sampled a variety of new dishes and shared their feedback on potential menu additions, creating a shared sense of excitement.

The inaugural event began with warm introductions from Chef Oula and Kevin Sweerts of Marquise Hospitality, joined by Almas Ifraimov, Union Villa's Food Service Manager. Together, they curated a diverse buffet featuring dishes from multiple cuisines, inviting residents to explore new flavours.

Union Villa staff, volunteers, and the food services team were present throughout the event, eager to hear residents' thoughts and preferences. Led by Marquise Hospitality, this initiative is part of a broader mission to

promote feedback, choice, and independence, ensuring that mealtime is inclusive and resident-driven, reflecting the tastes and voices of our home.

As long-term care communities become increasingly diverse, Menu Fest offers a meaningful way to elevate the dining experience. It sparks dialogue around one of the most cherished aspects of daily life: enjoying a comforting, home-cooked meal while discovering new favourites.

"I enjoyed the sampling! The menu is very important to us and I felt empowered to give my feedback AND it's always nice to try new foods." - Resident Mary and her daughter Michelle

We're already looking forward to next year's Menu Fest and the delicious possibilities it will bring.



My Life: A Resident Profile

Meet Ruth: From Northern Roots to Lifelong Learning: A Journey Through Family, Teaching, and Books

Ruth was born on December 9, 1930, and grew up just north of Parry Sound, where her father worked as a station agent. The youngest of four children, with two brothers and a sister, she remembers walking a mile to school each day, as there were no school buses at the time.

When asked about her childhood interests, Ruth fondly recalls her love of reading. "There was no TV," she says, "and I'd read until I fell asleep." She didn't have a particular favourite, though she remembers enjoying the Bobbsey Twins series. "I was reading everything in sight."

After high school, Ruth attended teacher's college and began her career at just eighteen years old. Her first job was at a small school outside Toronto, where she taught elementary students of various ages in a single classroom. "That was really about the only thing to do back then unless you wanted a desk job," she explains. "My three cousins all became teachers too. It was just what you did."

Ruth later taught in Coniston, near Sudbury, before moving to Newmarket. Life was quiet, but she enjoyed the Saturday night dances with other young people. It was at one of these dances in Mount Albert that she met Doug, who had moved to Ontario from Wainwright, Alberta.

The two married in 1955 in Sutton and settled in Newmarket. Ruth continued teaching for a few more years, while Doug worked in real estate before joining the federal government, where he inspected government-owned buildings and reported on needed repairs and maintenance.

Together, they adopted two children: Anne and Robert. Anne eventually moved to the Yukon,



where she met her husband and raised her family before returning to Ontario. Robert lives nearby. Ruth is a proud grandmother to three: Ashley, a teacher; Sarah, who is studying to become an occupational therapist; and Tyler, who plans to be a high school teacher. It seems the love of teaching came from their grandmother!

Ruth and Doug enjoyed traveling, especially to Florida and on cruises. They also visited Anne in the Yukon several times, staying for a couple of weeks each visit. Once they reached their seventies, Ruth says, they began to take things a little easier.

After Doug passed away, Ruth remained in Newmarket before moving to Union Villa. She's still an avid reader and recently finished a 500-page novel, *The Escape* by David Baldacci. She's now in the middle of *A Gathering of Secrets* by Linda Castillo. Her daughter-in-law brings her new books regularly, and Ruth jokes that she doesn't even need to go to the library. Her favorite genre? Police and crime thrillers. "Thank goodness for second-hand bookstores!" she says.

2025 UNION VILLA DINNER PARTY

Redefining Aging

Innovation, Dignity and the Future of Care

Thursday November 6, 2025

Angus Glen Golf Club | 6:00 pm Reception | 7:00pm Dinner

Tickets:

\$250 each until October 9 | \$300 as of October 10th



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Proceeds from the 2025 Union Villa Dinner Party will fund essential improvements to our home's infrastructure and help us invest in progressive technology that enhances our dementia-friendly model of care. These initiatives are part of our unwavering commitment to leading innovation in long-term care, while always putting first what matters most: the comfort, dignity, and joy of every resident who calls Union Villa their home.

For more information on tickets, corporate tables, sponsorship, or donating to our silent auction, please contact the Foundation at (905) 477-2822 ext 4270 or by email at dinnerparty@uhs.on.ca. We hope you can join us on November 6th!

*A portion of ticket fees may be eligible for a tax receipt, subject to CRA guidelines

Our Mission

Engaging our communities through a continuum of services that enhances the experience of aging.

Our Vision

A progressive community where older adults thrive, age well and live better.