

The SOCIETY Scoop

Season's Greetings from President and CEO, Abby Katz Starr

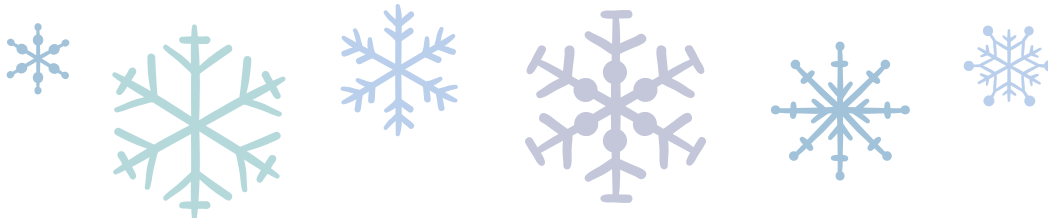
As we approach this joyous holiday season, I want to take a moment to extend my warmest wishes to each and every one of you. Regardless of your individual beliefs, this time of year provides an opportunity for us to come together and celebrate the spirit of unity, kindness, and gratitude. In our diverse and inclusive UHS family, we recognize and respect the variety of traditions, backgrounds, and beliefs that make us stronger and richer as a community.

Love, kindness and compassion are the universal values that connect us all. It is these shared principles that allow us to live and work together harmoniously and contribute to our collective success throughout the year. As we look back on the past year, we are immensely grateful for the dedication, hard work and unwavering commitment of our staff, volunteers, board members, donors and client families. Your collective efforts have been the driving force behind our accomplishments, and I couldn't be prouder of what we have achieved together. Let us enter the new year with renewed energy, ready to face the challenges and



opportunities that lie ahead. Together, we will continue to create a positive and inclusive environment for our seniors and a home experience that values all that live and work on our campus. I want to sincerely thank our board, staff, volunteers, donors and family members for your continued support.

Once again, from the bottom of my heart, I wish you a wonderful holiday season filled with love, happiness, and fulfillment. We are excited about the future and look forward to another year of shared successes.



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Staff Highlight: Recreation Therapy Team

Our Recreation Therapists (RTs) play a crucial role in Union Villa's spectrum of care – and it's more than just fun and games.

“Experiencing new things is important for everyone, not just residents,” says Lindsay, Recreation Manager. “Our team creates opportunities for residents to explore new activities – and we can't do that without first building trust.”

The goal of a RT is to create and deliver programs for residents that enhance their wellbeing in five therapeutic domains: social, physical, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual. RTs write care plans that aim to enrich residents' lives. They create activities and games that seem like they are just for fun – but fun with a therapeutic purpose. Says Lindsay, “Residents may not be able to leave the building easily, so we bring the leisure activities to them.”

In just this past year, residents participated in watercolour lessons, music therapy, a summer fair with games, soap-making, a maple syrup demonstration, and an outing to the Markham Fair.

Debbie, a veteran RT, says “A lot of people believe that residents come to the Villa and only maintain what they came in with – but that isn't the case. I remember a resident who moved in and discovered she loved painting at 92!” Debbie graduated with a degree in Social Work and tried RT because it sounded interesting. Twenty-one years later, she says she still loves it: “The people who work here are very special - loving, warm, great people who are working hard every day to make residents feel good. That is one of the many reasons why I stayed for so long -- I love Union Villa's culture and how it feels like home.”

For newer RTs like Elton, he says that working with seniors gives him insight into different life experiences that help him grow as a person. “I think it is our duty as RTs to ensure that each person lives a life they want to live, not a life they have to live.” He has seen residents rebuild skills and strengthen social connections with RT activities.

“Working with seniors has made it clear that age is just a number. It doesn't define who we are or what we should accomplish.”



Thank you our amazing Recreation Team:

Pictured above: Lenet Babu George, Lindsay Bailey, Nicole Alvarez, Manvir Kaur, Teashia Persaud, Edneyn Ma, Sharbiga Gunaselvam, Elton Sze

Absent in photo: Debbie Batzakis, Sarah Rose, Erica Chao, Preeti Manaktola, Lenard Tundayag

Resident Profile

Meet Vincenzo Curcio

Vincenzo was born in Calabria, Italy in 1935, the eldest of two brothers and a sister.

In post-war Italy, times were very hard and the people in cities were suffering with no jobs, so they came to the rural areas. People there had plots of land and knew how to farm. They helped each other as best they could. Immigrating seemed like the best option for the family, so Vincenzo's father and uncle left Italy for Canada. Vincenzo himself immigrated in 1954 at 18 with \$5 in his pocket.

Alongside his father and uncle, Vincenzo worked very hard to prepare for the arrival of the rest of the family. Vincenzo tried many jobs to make money: construction, maintenance, landscaping—hard jobs that were more available to Italian immigrants at the time. The family built up enough money to open a small barbershop in Scarborough in 1960. The whole family eventually relocated to Canada, but there was an important person still left in Italy.

Vincenzo grew up with a special girl named Maria who lived in the same town in Calabria. They had been sweet on each other for years and now that he was established, he wanted her to join him in Canada. He sent her a message saying, "I love you; would you come and marry me?" And she did! In 1959, they were married; they were together for 56 years until she passed away in 2015. Vincenzo likes to remember that she loved the Canadian winter, and especially the falling snow.

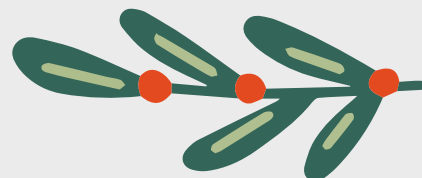
They had two children: Dominic in 1960 and Teresa in 1965. Vincenzo says these were very difficult times, everybody working to eat. He worked 6 days a week, but it was worth it because the family was able to have a home with a large garden where they could grow vegetables. The family made tomato sauce, cured meats,



bread and wine, and were able to keep the spirit of Calabria alive and well in their new home.

The family opened a new salon a few years later called Milano Barbershop. Eventually, there were three generations working there: Vincenzo, his father, and his son Dominic. When he retired, Dominic carried on the family legacy.

When Vincenzo's needs changed, Union Villa was the family's first choice. Two relatives were already living here, and their families were very happy with the care provided to their loved ones. Vincenzo loves the field trips and performances, especially Emilio's singing. He regularly plays cards with Carmelina and enjoys being in the garden.



Snapshot of Fall Events on our Campus



UCCS Registration – September



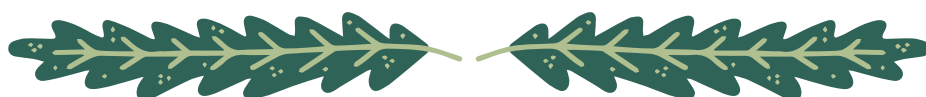
Moon Festival Celebration – October



Diwali Celebration – November



Remembrance Day – November 11



UCCS Seniors Active Living Fair - Promoting senior well-being

On November 15th, Unionville Community Centre for Seniors (UCCS) hosted its Fall 2023 Seniors Active Living Fair in partnership with the Ontario Adult Centres' Association of Ontario (OACAO)

Over 200 seniors, caregivers and family members accessed valuable resources, networked, and reconnected with Unionville Home Society programs, including UCCS, the Adult Day Program and the Southeast Geriatric Outreach Team. Twenty-one exhibitors, including non-profits, government agencies and for-profit organizations, were on hand to bring much-needed awareness to programs and services that promote active and healthy living, social engagement and learning for seniors.

Live presentations included:

- License Renewal Process for Drivers over 80 presented by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation



Thank you to our Fair Exhibitors



- An Action Plan for Successful Aging presented by Home Instead
- The Wonderful Health Benefits of Nordic Pole Walking, presented by Shawn Nisbet

We are grateful for the funding from the Government of Ontario which enabled us to provide the fair at no cost to participants. Thank you to Housing York Inc. for the wonderful space in the new Unionville Commons Seniors Housing building to host the event.

At UCCS, we are always seeking accessible and innovative experiences to serve and engage our older adults and strengthen our community. For information on membership and programs at UCCS, please email uccs@uhs.on.ca or call (437) 431-2831.

Volunteer Spotlight: Union Villa Spiritual Team



Union Villa's Spiritual Program provides more than just an opportunity for prayer. According to the Research Institute for Aging (RIA) spirituality is the "dimension of human experience that has to do with meaning, memory and mystery, lived out through connection to self, others, nature and the divine."

For many, the move to a long-term care home is a time of transition and uncertainty. Union Villa's program provides spiritual guidance, memorials, group and one-on-one support, and a variety of denominational services, including non-denominational. These services are coordinated by Pastor Jun Gao and the Recreation Team, and delivered by a dedicated group of spiritual volunteers.

Anita Lee from St. Justin Martyr Parish says, "Volunteers bring love and care to the residents and strengthen their trust and faith in God during this stage of their lives. Those who have the capacity to communicate verbally often express their sincere gratitude and appreciation to our volunteers by saying 'thank you', 'please come again'. While some can't speak, the peace and sweet smile on their face says it all."

The organizer of Union Villa's Ismaili prayer group, Noorjahan Pirani-Hirji, says that volunteers provide

community support to residents in various stages of their lives, particularly to palliative residents and their families: "We work as a team to address the emotional and spiritual needs of Ismaili residents and the larger community. All four Ismaili residents are in somewhat advanced stages of dementia and are not able to verbalize their feelings, but they are able to participate in familiar prayers."

Reverend Stephen Kern has led the Anglican Communion Service at Union Villa since 2011. His church, St. Philip's On-the-Hill, was part of the coalition of groups who founded Union Villa in 1967. He says, "We don't want to forget the people who were a part of our congregations for so many years but can't come in any longer, so we have to go to them. They are still a part of our community. Even for those who are unable to communicate, their spirits are responsive to love and connection."

We are so grateful to our spiritual volunteers for their dedication to enriching the lives of our residents. Through them, residents—regardless of denomination—are provided with a physical and emotional space for faith, gratitude, forgiveness, and connection.



Signature Fundraiser for Union Villa – Over \$88,000 Raised

The Unionville Home Society Foundation's signature fundraiser, the Union Villa Dinner Party, was held on Friday, November 3rd at Angus Glen Golf Club with 240+ in attendance and an auction hosted online to increase engagement.

This year's theme, *Our Spirit Never Ages*, highlighted the desire and determination of our residents to live life to its fullest, each and every day. The commitment from our community and corporate relationships surpassed our expectations, with increased support from sponsors, more guests than anticipated and, wonderful auction items which were all donated.

We are truly grateful to all who have participated in our many fundraising initiatives throughout the year. Your collective community spirit helps us deliver the highest standard of compassionate service to our residents.



Our Spirit Never Ages

2023 Union Villa Dinner Party Supporters

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MP Paul Chiang
Markham-Unionville

IAA Financial
Group

LUNA!
LOCAL 183

Celebrating the Season on our Campus



Holiday crafts bring joy to the Adult Day Program clients.



Adding finishing touches on the Christmas Tree for all to enjoy at Wyndham Gardens.



Holiday greetings from UCCS members

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.

