



## GEF Seniors Housing in 2020: The Year in Pictures

Despite the pandemic, it's been a busy and fulfilling year at GEF Seniors Housing. Here are just a few of the many highlights that made us smile:



1. At the beginning of the pandemic, flowers were donated from a local community group to spread the joy and love.
2. Holidays were celebrated with love, joy and laughter.
3. Smiles were flying as residents and tenants had a paper airplane contest.
4. Musical guests put on physically- distanced concerts during the summer months.
5. Everyone was in a happy mood during funky hat day.
6. A resident celebrating their 100th birthday... in true COVID style.
7. Creativity and crafts were flowing.
8. A vintage car show was a roaring hit.

## Season's Greetings from the CEO



Looking back over the past year here at GEF, it's been a challenging and rewarding year. Staff have worked hard to unite as a team, have fun and keep spirits high for our seniors and fellow co-workers. They have made a positive difference this year, and I am thankful to be part of the GEF family!

In May, we welcomed another community to GEF, **Westlawn Courts**. It has been wonderful getting to know our new tenants. With the addition of Westlawn, we are now serving more than 3,800 low-to-moderate income seniors. We love the work we do, and we can't wait to bring more communities into the GEF family, so we can provide more safe, quality and affordable housing in the city!

We worked hard this year to launch our new **gef.org website**. It is almost ready, and we are excited to show you the finished result! Featuring our own seniors and staff photos, our new website shows exactly what we do and the amazing people who are part of our communities. Earlier this year, we introduced the new housing section of the website. This section allows applicants to narrow down the community that best fits their criteria, and informs them of the amenities in each building and what the building looks like, as well as the character of the neighbourhood. Best of all, we have lots of brand-new photos of each building and the units, which allows the applicants to see the building and units without setting foot inside. With the pandemic, it turned out to be the perfect time to launch this tool for seniors to find their new home.

We wanted to streamline and create a more efficient process for applying for housing with GEF, so we centralized the housing application and interview process. To support the new process, we hired two new **Housing Placement Coordinator** staff. As a result, we have been able to significantly shorten the amount of time it takes to get new seniors into our buildings, and we have been able to free up site staff to do what they do best – building quality and lasting relationships with each of our tenants and residents.

We also **reorganized the portfolios** within GEF to better serve the needs of our tenants and residents. This change has allowed portfolios to have similar programming, to develop centres of expertise amongst managers, assistant managers and staff. These

changes have also allowed management teams more time to build client and staff relationships that are rooted and grounded in the Quality of Life Philosophy.

An important part of our Philosophy is resident and tenant activities and wellness, so we broadened the focus and responsibility of our Recreation Coordinator role, and these talented individuals are now known as **Activity and Wellness coordinators**.

As a part of the development and implementation of our new **Quality of Life Philosophy**, we introduced our revised **Pet Policy**. It's important to us to provide seniors with comfortable and supportive environments where they can successfully age in place, and revising our pet policy helps increase our tenants' and residents' quality of life. Our new furry tenants have been a fantastic addition to our GEF family!

A big project that we completed this year is the **laundry services conversion** to GEF-owned equipment, which began in 2019. It makes sense for GEF to own and maintain our own laundry machines, which will help contribute to support lodge programming. Even more exciting is the expansion of the laundry program to other organizations – in particular the Heartland Housing Foundation in Sherwood Park and Fort Saskatchewan.

This year, although we were unable to hold our **Building for Life Breakfast fundraiser**, we created a virtual event on the GEF website, so past donors would have an opportunity to contribute this year. We also held a scaled-down, virtual **Great Knitting Giveaway** event, where thousands of items hand-knitted by GEF seniors were donated to four charities in Edmonton's inner city.

Over the past several months, it has been amazing to see the **community come together** and give back to our tenants and residents. We saw donations of food, activity booklets, toiletries, socially-distanced concerts and surprise family visits outside of residents' windows. It makes us happy that so many people took the time to make sure our seniors knew they were loved!

I wish you and your family the very best of health and happiness for the coming year!

## Lauderdale Homes Redevelopment Update



Our Lauderdale Homes redevelopment continues to progress. Re-named the Lauderdale Terrace project, it is moving toward the validation stage under an Integrated Project Delivery (IPD) contract with seven firms: GEF Seniors Housing; RPK Architects; Delnor Construction; Larsen Engineering; Territorial Electric; Arrow Engineering, and Priority Mechanical. Validation is the point where the final budget is confirmed and the team agrees to proceed to detailed design and construction.

The IPD model means that all contractors and suppliers share in the risks and rewards of the project, and helps ensure the project is completed to all agreed-upon specifications – on time and on budget.

This is a seniors-friendly, pet-friendly and environmentally-friendly development, and the building is being designed to be Net Zero electrical, maximizing the use of solar photovoltaic panels and air-to-air heat pumps.

We appreciated the participation and time of Lauderdale residents over three rounds of community consultations.

They provided valuable feedback on a preferred building and unit design. After the third round of consultations, a current Lauderdale tenant wrote, “I am happy and impressed by the way we have been included in this whole process. Our ideas and questions have been acknowledged and listened to. Thank you staff at GEF.”

Gradually, Lauderdale tenants have been relocating to other GEF buildings, and the remaining tenants will move out over the next few months. Asbestos remediation work is currently scheduled for later in spring, 2021 prior to demolition of the existing buildings. We hope that new construction will begin in late summer, 2021.

The new development will increase the number of units at Lauderdale from the current 12 to a total of 37 affordable housing units. We are excited as we work through the various building and suite layout options, making decisions that will ultimately result in someone’s future home!



## Great Knitting Giveaway

Each year, GEF Seniors Housing holds one of its biggest events, the Great Knitting Giveaway. It looked a little different this year thanks to the pandemic, but the knitting from our residents and tenants did not stop. More than 5,000 items were hand-made with love to donate to four local charities who will spread the love and warmth to their clients, now that the cold Edmonton winter is upon us.

The GEF team and volunteers from ServiceMaster spent an entire day organizing the beautifully-knit items to distribute to the charities in need. Charities that were included in the Great Knitting Giveaway this year were Operation Friendship Seniors Society, Crystal Kids Youth Centre, Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers and Edmonton Emergency Relief Services Society. Items that these charities received included hats, mitts, scarves, blankets, socks, slippers, and even sweaters! The charities were so happy to see the bags of donated items when they came to pick them up. Jimmy Morrison, with Operation Friendship Seniors Society, said “it is an amazing feeling to hand out your items [to

our seniors] and let them know that someone cares about them.” One exciting part of our usual Great Knitting Giveaway event is watching all the seniors gather and collect new skeins of yarn and wool so they can start new projects for the upcoming year. Unfortunately that couldn’t happen this year, but each site held their own smaller Great Knitting Giveaway event. Residents and tenants had their own special lunch or tea, watched a thank you video put together by our charities and still got to pick yarn and wool for their new projects. Although much smaller than normal, it was important for us to show our thanks to each knitter who contributed so many hours and love to give back to the community!

This year has been unlike any other. GEF’s goal was simply to remind each person receiving these items and our knitters how special they are and that others care about them.



## Pets of GEF Seniors Housing



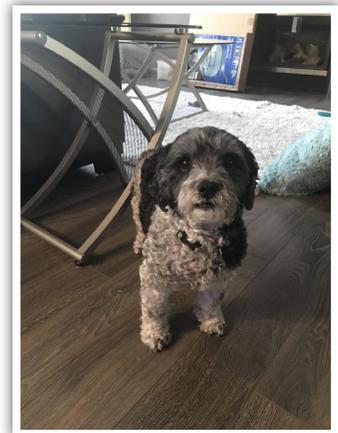
It has been almost a year since we amended our Pet Policy to allow pets into our GEF communities, and what a fantastic decision this was. We know that pets are like family, and can often provide social and emotional support and unconditional love!

It was important for us to reassess this policy so we can provide our residents and tenants with a comfortable and supportive environment where they can successfully age in place and improve their quality of life. You'll be happy to know that GEF now has 43 furry friends, including dogs, cats, and birds, in our communities.



We have heard so many stories of the positive impact pets have had on residents, tenants, and staff of GEF!

Elaine and Pepper, whom we met almost a year ago, have perfectly settled into Porta Place. Pepper, photo right, has taken extremely well to his new home and to the other tenants as well. Elaine says that, when common spaces were open, Pepper would lay at the feet of other residents, and they would enjoy talking to him! Elaine says he's almost like the "shared pet for the building" as everyone loves him and he loves the attention! Throughout the pandemic, Elaine has been grateful to have Pepper with her as it allows her to get out and take him for walks, so she doesn't feel isolated at all.



We love seeing the smiles brought to tenants and residents faces as dogs pass by in the hallways, the ooh's and aah's that are said giddily and the countless pets and belly rubs. We can't wait to see many more smiling faces of furry friends throughout the years to come.



## Virtual Building for Life Breakfast Fundraiser

Every year, GEF Seniors Housing holds its **Building for Life Breakfast Fundraiser**. With the donations raised at this event, we improve our seniors' quality of life through activities, wellness and community services.

This year, the need is the same, but we all know this year isn't like any other year. As with all not-for-profits, we were unable to hold an in-person fundraising event, so we have moved the fundraiser online.

To find out more about the virtual breakfast fundraiser, visit [gef.org](http://gef.org) and click on this graphic on the homepage.



## GEF Adds Three New Communities to the Family



We are looking forward to starting off 2021 on a very positive foot. GEF will add three new communities to our list, giving Edmonton seniors even more affordable housing choices in the city. As of January 1, we will take over management of **Central Manor**, a 48-unit building located in central Edmonton, **Bethany Senior Citizens Home**, a 59-unit building in southeast Edmonton and **Ritchie Pioneer Place**, a 51-unit building also in southeast Edmonton.

With the addition of these three communities, it brings our total to 46 buildings, which allows us to serve just under **4,000** low-to-moderate income seniors in Edmonton. We are eager to get to know our new tenants and welcome them into the GEF Seniors Housing family!



### We welcome your feedback!

Do you have a question about GEF Seniors Housing, or a suggestion for a topic you'd like to see covered in a future issue of Community Connections? Please let us know: [communications@gef.org](mailto:communications@gef.org)

### Connect with GEF

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