

STORIES *&* PROFILES



Seniors
Housing

ABOUT GEF SENIORS HOUSING

GEF Seniors Housing is Alberta's largest not for profit and registered charity dedicated to providing affordable seniors housing options to low to moderate income seniors in Edmonton. CEO Raymond Swonek explains that the organization's long history in Edmonton has made it a staple to the city.

"What we're about is providing affordable, friendly, and secure housing to seniors," says Swonek, whose more than ten years with GEF as its CEO (and another five years as its Director of Finance before) has made him one of the loudest and most prominent voices advocating for affordable seniors housing.

GEF Seniors Housing was established in 1959 under the provincial government to provide affordable housing to low income seniors. Over time, it evolved and began expanding its operations to also begin managing other buildings throughout the city owned by the provincial government. As Swonek explains, GEF managing some of the buildings was important to him.

"A lot of these places needed significant renovations," he says. "We started managing some of the places and got right to work renovating them and making sure that these were all places that we would want our own grandparents to live, our parents to live, and one day somewhere maybe we would want to live."

Today, GEF owns and manages more than 40 different apartments and lodges, providing affordable seniors housing to more than 3,500 seniors in Edmonton. Currently, GEF also has more than 500 staff, including kitchen attendants to Red Seal chefs, office administrators, and recreation coordinators. GEF has been named one of the Best Small to Medium Employers in Canada by *Canadian Business* magazine.

"When people are invested in their jobs and happy with where they're working, they work harder and do a better job," says Swonek. That amazing effort from our staff trickles down directly to the quality of life our residents and tenants experience living in a GEF building."

Swonek knows better than anyone how real the need for affordable seniors housing is in Edmonton. He points out that 60 Albertans turn 65 every day and that the Alberta senior population will be close to one million in fifteen years. It's easy to understand why Swonek is so committed to continually expanding GEF's operations and making sure that no senior ever has to worry about where they're going to live.

"Our average resident makes around \$1,800 a month," says Swonek. "That's not a lot of money to enjoy your golden years. We work directly with our residents to set their rent rate, ensuring that they stay above the poverty line and can enjoy their lives without having to worry whether they can afford rent that month or if they can afford food that week."

GEF's work has seen multiple recognitions including at the National Philanthropy Day for volunteer work done by their recreation coordinators and tenant knitting clubs, and a Recognizing Outstanding Organizations and People in Housing (ROOPH) award from Homeward Trust for Ottewell Terrace. Though the awards and recognitions are great, Swonek's motivation for continuing his mission in providing affordable seniors housing in Edmonton remains steadfast.

"To this day, my mother-in-law is living in Ottewell Place," says Swonek. "When my family and I go to visit her and we see how happy and comfortable she is, I know this is what I want my own golden years to look like. This is what everyone's golden years should look like."

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The strength of a nation derives from the integrity of the home.

Confucius

The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.

Mahatma Gandhi

”

I love these two quotes. They perfectly capture what GEF Seniors Housing is all about.

On the surface, what GEF Seniors Housing does is straight-forward; providing affordable apartments and lodges to seniors living in Edmonton. If at the end of the day we said our job was done because we found a senior a home, we would only be doing part of our job.

As you look through this book, you will see everything that GEF works on, which goes above and beyond the bricks and mortar of housing. From food to recreation and even how we approach new capital building projects is all covered in this book to give a holistic sense of what we do as an organization to positively influence seniors' quality of life.

This book covers *what* GEF Seniors Housing does very well. Just as important is the *why*. The numbers are staggering as there will be more than a million seniors living in Alberta in just fifteen years. The number of seniors in need of affordable housing is increasing every day. Housing in Edmonton is more expensive than ever and most seniors who live on Basic Government Pension often struggle to pay rent while keeping food on the table and being able to enjoy their golden years.

I don't ever want to see a senior worry about where they are going to live. Everyone deserves a home that is friendly, affordable, and secure. For me, this is my contribution to helping make Edmonton, the city I live in, a better place to live, grow, and age.

When I look to the above quotes from two very important people in history, it helps keep me grounded as to why we keep pushing forward with our mission to provide friendly, affordable, and secure housing and services to Edmonton's seniors.

That is the *why* to everything that we do here at GEF Seniors Housing. Now, enjoy the rest of this book while you learn all about *what* makes us proud of this organization.



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO RAYMOND SWONEK

GEF SENIORS HOUSING RED SEAL CHEFS

Ana Maria Muhammad started her career with GEF Seniors Housing in 1999 as a kitchen aide, but quickly worked her way up and eventually earned her Red Seal designation in 2002 and worked at a few different GEF Seniors Housing sites before landing at Ottewell Place in 2004, where she continues her career today. Though Muhammad knows that every meal that comes out of her kitchen needs to meet certain nutritional criteria set by the Canada Food Guide, she also knows that if she makes meals that no one wants to eat, she's not doing her job right.

"I quickly realized that this isn't a restaurant, this is people's homes," Muhammad says. She goes on to explain that she visually notices a huge difference in the people living in the lodge when the food is good. She sees them happier, more energetic, and in better spirits when she hits the mark on that perfect meal. Since taking over the kitchen at Ottewell Place lodge, she's opened up the lines of communication not just with the other staff but with the residents as well.

This is a standard practice for every Red Seal Chef working at a GEF Seniors Housing lodge kitchen. Good food is not only important for its nutritional qualities that help with a person's overall health, but it also adds to a person's quality of life. Working closely with the registered dietitians and nutritionists, GEF Seniors Housing's chefs are able to create menus for breakfast, lunch, and dinner that are exciting, delicious, and nutritious.

For Muhammad, some of her meal ideas come directly from the residents living at Ottewell

Place. She meets with the residents often to discuss what their meal experience has been like, what they enjoyed, and what they would like to see served. As Muhammad explains, sometimes the residents even pass on family recipes for her to try out.

"I love that I get to keep learning about all these different foods," Muhammad says. "The residents' feedback helps make sure that everyone in the kitchen is always improving and getting better at what they do to make our residents happy. The staff are very supportive in making sure that we provide the best service to the residents through teamwork and hard work."

Food is often forgotten as a major source for health and wellness, especially in seniors. There is a bevy of health issues for seniors that tie directly into malnutrition, such as poor immune response, increase risk of bone fractures and breaks, decreased wound healing, and even sarcopenia (which is a rapid loss of muscle tissue). Seniors who eat better tend to live longer and don't experience as many of the typical aging issues as quickly. The Chefs working with GEF Seniors Housing take to heart the importance of serving good food and use their passions for cooking to ensure that every senior living in a GEF Seniors Housing lodge eats well.

Muhammad's passion for food easily translated into her work with seniors. "I just think about how much I love my parents," she says. "And I look at the residents like they're my parents too. What I serve from our kitchen, I would serve to my own parents."



Older adults who need supportive living require not only high quality meals and light housekeeping but also need activities that support their mental and spiritual well-being. In our lodges we are proud to provide it all for an affordable cost.

High Quality Meals

At each lodge, residents enjoy three meals and snacks every day of the year prepared by certified Red Seal Chefs who enjoy providing meals that meet the nutritional needs of seniors while still appealing to their taste palettes. Each year Chefs work with a Registered Dietitian to improve the menus while maintaining a healthy balance. It is important to the chefs to have open communication with the residents to ensure the meals are delicious and that they feel at home.

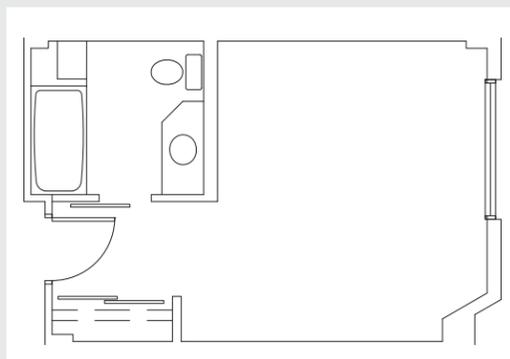
Your Home

Our lodge suites are sitting room-style accommodations for an affordable rental cost of 30 per cent of your monthly income plus supportive service fee, which include your meals and snacks, staff on site 24 hours a day, linen cleaning service, and light weekly housekeeping. The weekly housekeeping services include bathroom cleaning, vacuuming, and dusting. Linen cleaning and bed making are also done on the weekly housekeeping days.

Keeping Active

Recreation coordinators at each lodge have programs that are shaped around residents' mind, body, spirit, and community. For mind, cognitive programs designed to support and maintain memory and brain fitness. For body, fitness and wellness programs focused on improving vitality, functional endurance, strength, flexibility and circulation. For spirit, stimulating, creative engagement in musical, cultural, spiritual, and life-enriching events. And for a sense of community, social and interactive programs designed to develop and maintain ties to the community and the world around us.

LODGES



*Floorplans vary between buildings and we can't guarantee exact layouts.



Safety Is Key

Staff is at the lodges seven days a week ensuring a safe and secure home for the residents. It gives peace of mind knowing someone is always on hand to deal with any emergencies or concerns at the lodge. GEF buildings are certified Crime Free Multi-Housing properties in partnership with the Edmonton Police Service. Crime prevention techniques are followed to reduce the likelihood of criminal activity occurring on or around the property. The safety and security extends right into each room with emergency call systems that connect directly to onsite staff.

THE GREAT KNITTING GIVEAWAY

Every year, members of knitting clubs based in GEF Seniors Housing buildings donate thousands of pieces of winter outdoor wear to local charities at an event that's become known as the Great Knitting Giveaway. All the yarn used was donated to the knitting clubs throughout the year at the more than 40 buildings that GEF Seniors Housing currently owns or manages. The winter clothing given out ranges from toques to mittens to scarfs and even includes pieces for children and newborns.

“This is an opportunity for the seniors to give back to their communities,” says Emily Rotella, Assistant Manager with Pleasantview Place and former Chair of the Great Knitting Giveaway event. “The people who receive the items our knitters donated doesn't just give them warmth on the outside for the cold months, but warmth on the inside too knowing that someone cares enough to hand make a toque or a scarf that's going to help them.”

The event itself is a thank you to the knitters who made the clothing that was donated and features speakers from the charities receiving the items, telling the seniors about the kinds of people their contributions are going on to help. Charities that collect the winter clothing include the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Operation Friendship, schools in low-income areas such as St. Benedict Catholic School, and the Royal Alexandra Hospital maternity ward.

“A lot of the seniors don't think their donations are a big deal,” Rotella says. “But, [for example], they're giving a baby her first toque and that

family is going to treasure it for their whole lives.”

The knitters meet year-round as part of their recreation programs to make the winter clothing that is eventually donated. The seniors are given new knitting patterns to continually challenge them and keep the activity interesting. For many seniors, the knitting clubs are a chance to socialize and remain close to others living in their buildings. But for some, it's what gives them a purpose to their lives.

“We have some knitters who never went to school and never learned to read,” says Rotella. “So knitting is what they can contribute to the world and it's how they know they can help others.”

For Rotella, the Great Knitting Giveaway is an opportunity not just to show the knitting clubs from GEF Seniors Housing an appreciation for everything they do throughout the year, but also demonstrate that what would be something to pass the time for many is actually making a huge difference in Edmonton communities.

“We participated in an event at St. Benedict Catholic School where some of our seniors read to the children and we asked how many received winter clothing from the Great Knitting Giveaway and almost all of the hands went up,” Rotella says. “That was a moment when some of our seniors realized how much of a difference their donations made. These are children who would have gone the winter without mittens or toques and the kindness of a few knitters made sure these children stayed warm during the winter.”



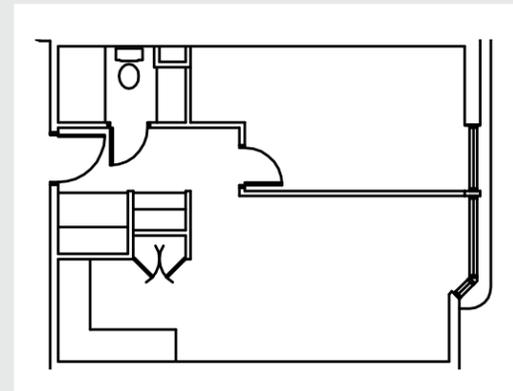
For many seniors considering moving into a more affordable new home, independence is important. No one wants to be told when they can or can't go out to see friends or what they're not allowed to cook for themselves or their families for dinner. Seniors housing doesn't mean sacrificing independence. The self-contained apartment options located all across the City of Edmonton offer both the benefits of living in a GEF Seniors Housing building and an independent lifestyle that allows choice in how golden years are going to be spent.

Apartment Options

One-bedroom, two-bedroom, and even bachelor style apartments are all available throughout the self-contained apartment buildings and all include plenty of storage, a two appliance kitchen, and a three piece washroom. The room sizes range from 300 to 600 square-feet, depending on how many bedrooms the apartment has, but the square-footage won't affect the price-point. Like most other GEF Seniors Housing buildings, rent is based entirely on income. Thirty per cent of gross monthly income will be set for rent, which also includes heat and water. Everything else with the apartments, from cable to phone and even furnishings, is up to the tenants to decide what best serves their lifestyles.

Offering more than just Rooms

Independence is important, but that doesn't mean tenants are totally alone once they move in. GEF Seniors Housing employs a maintenance team with members on-call 24-hours for any emergency that may come up with the building or any of the suites. Each of the apartment buildings are able to call nearby lodge sites, which have their own 24-hour staff, to help ensure that the buildings and everyone living inside are safe at all times. Safety is so important to GEF Seniors Housing that a partnership was made with the Edmonton Police Service to be a part of the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program that helps reduce crime in and on the premises around the buildings.



*Floorplans vary between buildings and we can't guarantee exact layouts.



Creating Communities

For most of the tenants living in GEF Seniors Housing apartments, what becomes most important is the communities they create with other tenants and even the neighbourhood at large. With so many buildings located all across the city, many tenants are able to move into a GEF Seniors Housing building without leaving their neighbourhood. They're able to keep their same doctor, visit the same shopping centres, and keep many of the same friends they've had for years all while making new friends with neighbours in the building. Community is important and GEF Seniors Housing works to ensure that no one living in one of the buildings ever has to experience loss, isolation, or loneliness because of where they live.

SELF-CONTAINED APARTMENTS

COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

Shanika Donalds knows better than most the harsh impacts that social isolation can have on seniors. Her role with GEF Seniors Housing as Community Supports Manager was created to help address the issue of social isolation in the seniors living in GEF Seniors Housing homes. For her, there is no such thing as a typical day. From one-on-one consultations to large-scale presentations during building resident meetings, Donalds and the rest of the Community Supports team work to find the underlying causes in the individual cases of social isolation and how to best work through those issues.

“Our main operation as Community Supports is to help address seniors isolation in connection with quality of life, which in short is assessing if a person’s environment fulfills their needs,” says Donalds. “When an individual loses a partner or friends, the number of meaningful interactions declines, and this can include interactions with essential services like doctors and dentists. What we want to do is help those who are feeling isolated make those connections they need and raise their quality of life.”

The roots of the Community Supports team stems back from when GEF Seniors Housing partnered with the Department of Human Ecology at the University of Alberta to evaluate the current quality of life for the residents and tenants living in GEF Seniors Housing buildings. Jacquie Eales, now a members of the GEF Seniors Housing Board, developed a Q-Sort card system that allowed participants to order different aspects of quality of life

according to importance to them. Through this exercise, many aspects of social isolation began to surface and because Donalds was on the team of researchers for the Q-Sort card study, she was the perfect person to start addressing social isolation head on.

The one-on-one meetings Donalds has with residents and tenants are typically from referrals, either from building managers or other residents and tenants. The Community Supports team then meets with the individual, discusses the challenges they’re facing, and helps to find solutions to these challenges and ensure that their making the meaningful connections they need for a good quality of life.

Donalds explains that her team, with their specific mandate to serve seniors living in GEF Seniors Housing buildings, has its collection of challenges. Residents and tenants living in GEF Seniors Housing buildings pride themselves in living independently, so for many asking for help feels like submitting their independence.

“It’s actually the opposite where we’re working to ensure that the residents can keep living independently and have access to all the essential services they need while still having those meaningful connections,” says Donalds. But for every bit of pushback that Donalds may see from the people she works with, she just as often sees seniors immediately acknowledging they need help and embracing what the Community Supports team has to offer.



“One of my proudest achievements is when I get a call from a senior who saw a poster or a brochure and they took the initiative to seek out help. Then, it spreads by word of mouth where seniors tell each other they should call us and that it’s a good thing and we really help.

Shanika Donalds

Some of GEF Seniors Housing's most unique homes are not in a building at all but instead look like they are part of small villages. Golden Homes and Lauderdale Homes are GEF Seniors Housing's two sets of duplex homes, offering the same benefits and sense of security tenants can find in a GEF Seniors Housing building, but with a unique look and feel that cannot be found at any other rental property in Edmonton.

Unique Homes

GEF Seniors Housing's duplex homes offer full landscaping in the summer and full snow removal in the winter for the outdoor properties to complement the one and two bedroom suites available for rent. Each of the suites have outdoor spaces that tenants are allowed to add their own unique flares to such as potted plants or small gardens. The duplex homes are also GEF Seniors Housing's only current properties that allow small pets. With unique features also comes a unique price point. Though the rent for the duplex homes are at a fixed rate and are not based on the tenant's income, the rates remain well below market value to ensure affordability and accessibility for low-to-moderate income seniors.

The Comforts of Home

For all the unique aspects there are to the duplex homes, there are the certain comforts that anyone would expect from any GEF Seniors Housing home. The one and two bedroom suites all include a single three piece washroom, a two appliance kitchen, plenty of storage, and living space to enjoy individually or with visiting guests. Both duplex home locations are close to shopping centres and bus stops for anyone who may no longer want to drive.

DUPLEX HOMES



Vibrant Communities

Often more important than the suites themselves for the tenants, the greater communities that GEF Seniors Housing's duplex homes sit in are lively and senior friendly. Nearby amenities and seniors activity centres ensure that the quality of life for anyone living in a duplex home remains high. Neighbours quickly become friends, community centres become second homes, and strong communities are formed for those who are looking for close-knit relationships. Community is important and the duplex homes offered by GEF Seniors Housing help to foster those communities.

PRIMROSE PLACE FAMILY CENTRE

For a long time, Primrose Place Family Centre struggled to find a permanent home. As one of Alberta's oldest not-for-profit daycare centres, the Southeast Edmonton community it operated in came to depend on the programs Primrose Place Family Centre offered. But with frequent moves to spaces that could only accommodate them for a short while, the number of children enrolled began to dwindle. Word spread around the Board of Directors with Primrose Place Family Centre about a new seniors housing building being built in the Ottewell neighbourhood and that the organization building the complex, GEF Seniors Housing, was holding public consultations on the project. Board Chair Burke Smith decided to attend the community meeting to see if there was anything that could be done for Primrose in this new building space.

“Community consultations are an important part of any building project,” says GEF Seniors Housing CEO Raymond Swonek. “It’s an opportunity to both be a good neighbour to the community at large as well as to see where else we can help the community. In the case of Ottewell Terrace, we found a unique need and we were able to offer a solution that added an incredible amount of value to the community.” Negotiations between GEF Seniors Housing and Primrose Place Family Centre began shortly after that community consultation. It was quickly settled that GEF Seniors Housing would lease space on the main floor of Ottewell Terrace to Primrose Place Family Centre and finally give the daycare centre a permanent home.

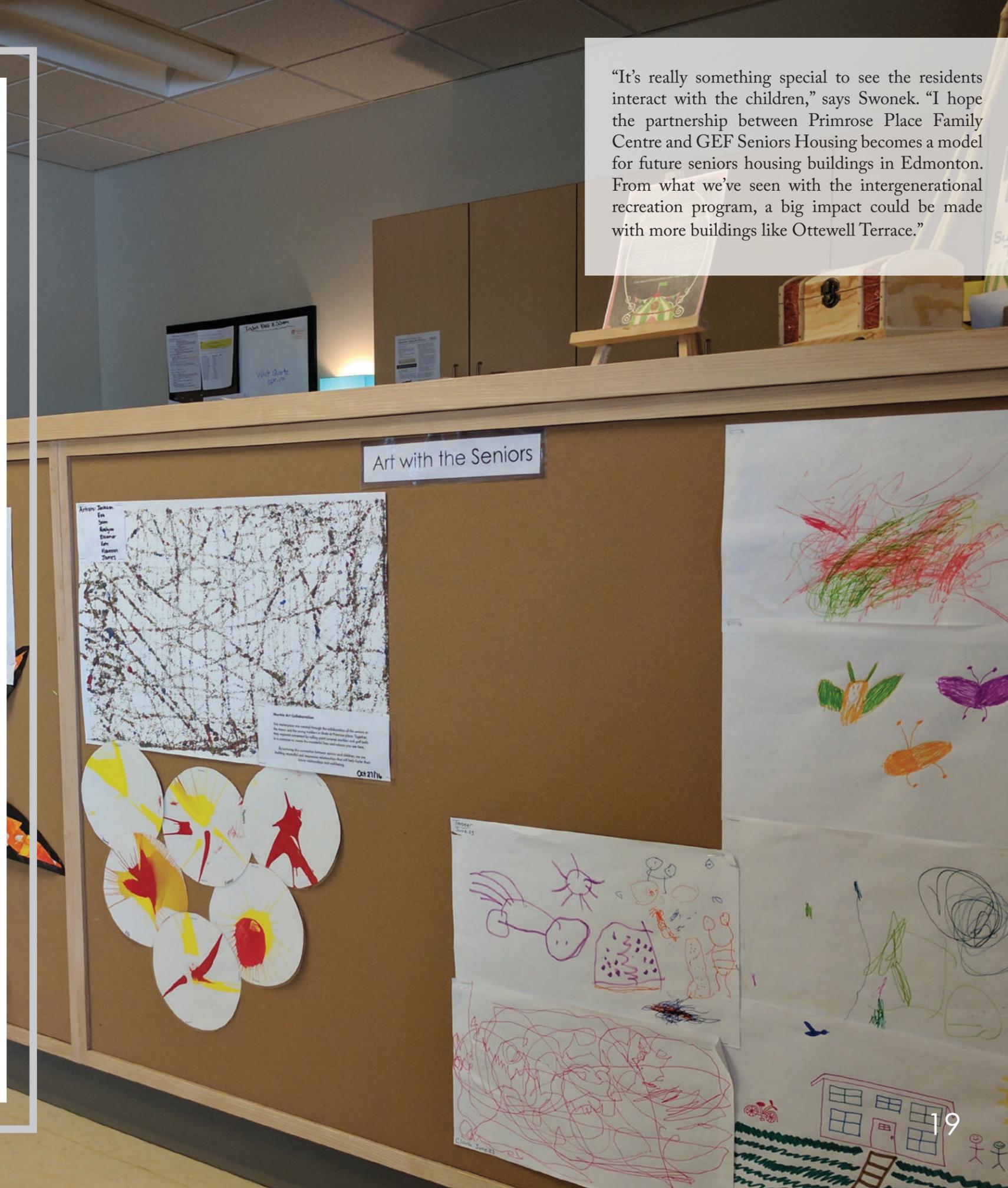
“At the time, I had never heard of a seniors housing building also housing a daycare centre,” explains Swonek. “But I immediately saw a unique opportunity, not just to provide space for the important daycare centre in the community but also for the seniors we house in the community.”

Next door to Ottewell Terrace are two other GEF Seniors Housing buildings: Ottewell Manor and Ottewell Place. Where Ottewell Terrace is a completely independent living apartment, Ottewell Manor and Ottewell Place both offer lodge accommodations, which means a full recreation program for the residents. Swonek points out that it didn’t take long to make the connection between the lodge’s recreation programs and the operations at the daycare centre.

“In no time, the residents at Ottewell Place and Ottewell Manor were interacting with the children,” says Swonek. “The residents love reading to the children, taking part in arts and crafts, and just spending time with them.”

Swonek cites studies that have shown the mental and physical health benefits that can come with an intergenerational recreation program for seniors and children. The seniors engage parts of their brains that might not typically be as active, the activities can help with seniors’ moods and general happiness, and the children learn to appreciate people from older generations. For Swonek, an intergenerational program might not have been top of mind when he first met with Primrose Place Family Centre, but it’s an outcome that gives him a lot of pride.

“It’s really something special to see the residents interact with the children,” says Swonek. “I hope the partnership between Primrose Place Family Centre and GEF Seniors Housing becomes a model for future seniors housing buildings in Edmonton. From what we’ve seen with the intergenerational recreation program, a big impact could be made with more buildings like Ottewell Terrace.”



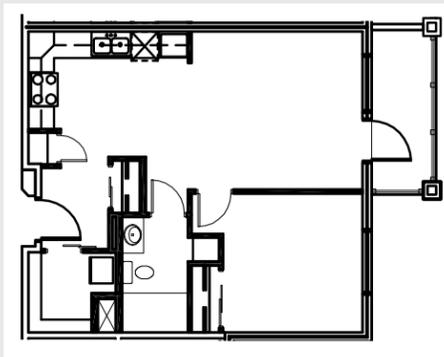
When GEF Seniors Housing opened Rosslyn Terrace in 2012, they made a bold decision to change how they wanted to approach building new apartment complexes for low to moderate income seniors. Rosslyn Terrace was the first non-lodge building that GEF Seniors Housing ever owned, where every apartment building before was owned by the Province of Alberta and GEF Seniors Housing managed the operations and maintenance of the building. Because of this new sense of ownership, GEF Seniors Housing decided that constructing new complexes would mean building high-quality and high-value buildings that feel far from affordable housing.

A New Standard for Affordable Seniors Housing

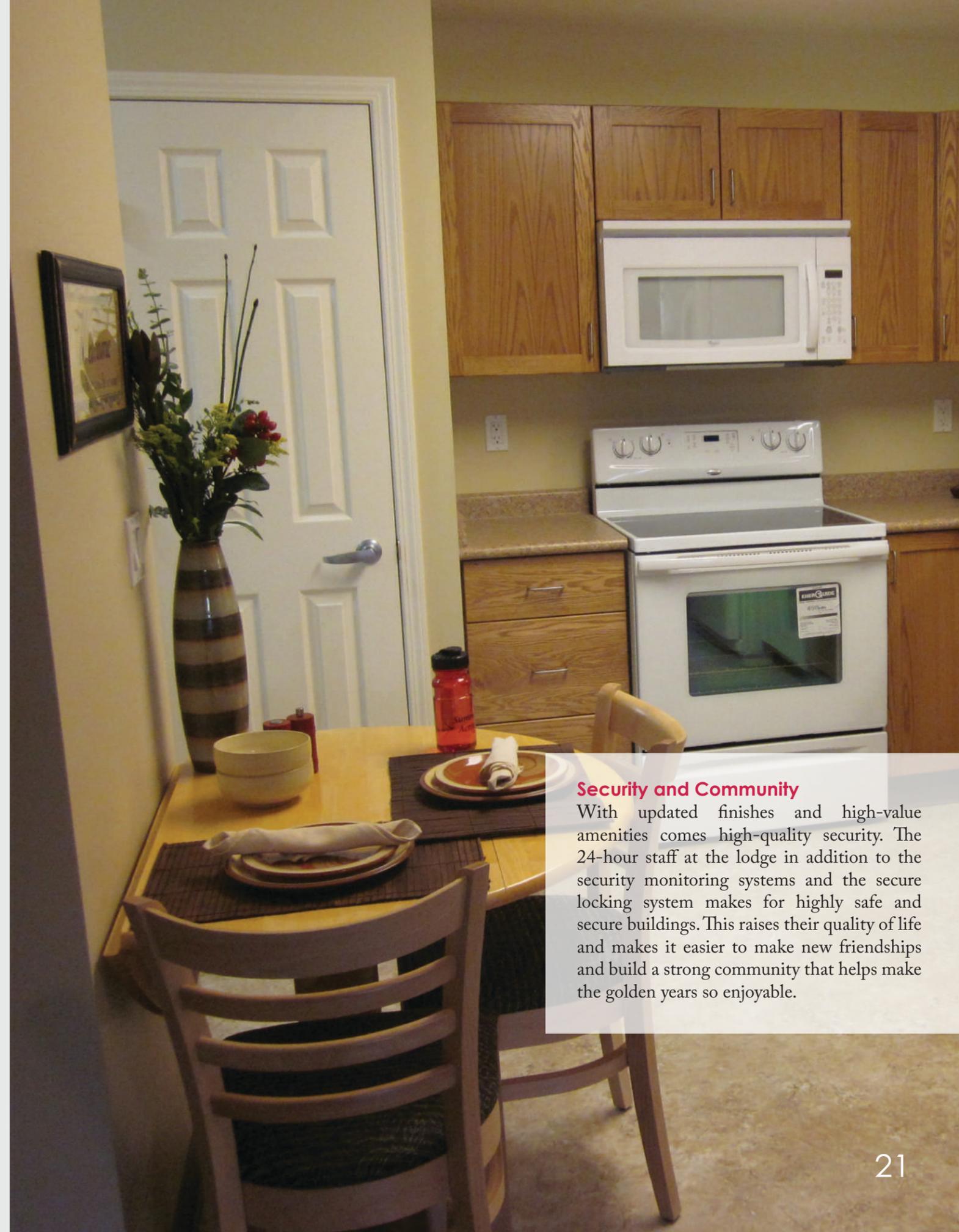
Rosslyn Terrace's opening in 2012 marked the beginning of a new approach to affordable seniors housing not for GEF Seniors Housing, but for all of Edmonton. Shortly after Rosslyn Terrace's opening, GEF Seniors Housing opened its second affordable apartment building, Ottewell Terrace, in 2015. Both buildings feature larger square-footage one and two bedroom suites, with four appliance kitchens, a three piece bathroom, and plenty of storage. The suites are senior friendly, have high quality finishes and there are suites specifically for people who need barrier free access.

Services Beyond the Suite

For all the quality seen in the individual suites, the value in living in one of GEF Seniors Housing's Affordable Apartments building doesn't end at the apartments themselves. Tenants have access to laundry facilities in the building, recreation spaces, and even above and below ground parking options. With both Affordable Apartments buildings being directly connected to lodges, tenants even have the options of joining the lodge residents for dinner if they do not feel like cooking. For a very reasonable price, the tenants at the apartments can enjoy the same buffet dinners provided by GEF Seniors Housing's Red Seal Chefs that the lodge residents get to enjoy every day.



AFFORDABLE APARTMENTS



Security and Community

With updated finishes and high-value amenities comes high-quality security. The 24-hour staff at the lodge in addition to the security monitoring systems and the secure locking system makes for highly safe and secure buildings. This raises their quality of life and makes it easier to make new friendships and build a strong community that helps make the golden years so enjoyable.

OTTEWELL MANOR

Kim Ruzycki remembers her first visit to Ottewell Manor. She recalls touring the building, walking through the dining room and seeing all the rooms in the building that she and her neighbours would be living in. She had spent the previous year living at Rosary Hall and many of her neighbours there were also making the switch to Ottewell Manor, so she wasn't nervous about moving. In fact, as she settled into her new home, she was surprised by what her living conditions were like.

"We can make all of our own decisions and do things for ourselves," Ruzycki says. "But there is a strong support system here."

Ruzycki is one of 38 residents currently living in Ottewell Manor. And like all the residents at Ottewell Manor, she's living with conditions that would make living completely independently almost impossible. Residents at Ottewell Manor live with a range of different conditions from depression and anxiety to bi-polar disorder and schizophrenia.

Ottewell Manor was built in 1962 and was a seniors lodge for many years. In 2010, negotiations between Alberta Health Services (AHS) and the Greater Edmonton Foundation Seniors Housing (GEF Seniors Housing) began with the intention of dedicating Ottewell Manor strictly for seniors struggling with mental health conditions. In May of 2012, Ottewell Manor's first new residents started moving in.

"None of us had any background in mental health before Ottewell Manor opened," explains Shelley Fox, Assistant Manager with GEF Seniors Housing who spends the majority of her time overseeing the operations of Ottewell Manor. "We received some training from AHS before we opened, but we also set some clear guidelines in our agreement as to where the mental health support would be coming from."

GEF Seniors Housing's partnership with AHS focuses on the operations and support for its residents. Therapists, case workers, and even some homecare providers work directly with GEF Seniors Housing to ensure that everyone living in Ottewell Manor is receiving the mental health support that they need.

"AHS are the experts in mental health, we know and respect that and we wouldn't want to try and replace that," says Lisa Bereziuk, Manager of the larger Ottewell portfolio of buildings for GEF Seniors Housing. "What we as supportive living are doing is ensuring that the other side of that quality of life equation is being met. We're making sure that the food we serve is of the best quality, the recreation options are things our residents are interested in, that the building is clean and well taken care of, and that the day to day of living here is the best it can possibly be."

Like all GEF Seniors Housing supportive living sites, Ottewell Manor features a full commercial kitchen with a Red Seal chef on staff, a designated recreation coordinator setting up programs for the residents, and the freedom for the residents to choose what they want to take part in.

Both Fox and Bereziuk attribute a large part of Ottewell Manor's success to the open communication they continue to have with their partners in AHS. With each organizations' roles so clearly defined, there's very rarely any disconnect between them, and that helps keep the operations in Ottewell Manor running smoothly and ensures that all the residents have a great quality of life.

"Hospital visits are considerably down for our residents, and most of the time you can't even tell our residents are living with any sort of condition," says Fox. "The work being done here is helping a lot with breaking the current stigma around mental health. Even within GEF Seniors Housing, new staff will be hired and not realize what Ottewell Manor does and they'll be visibly uncomfortable about it until they actually visit Ottewell Manor and see how wrong their misconceptions were. That these are just normal people who want what anyone else would want: a good quality of life."



SAKAW TERRACE

Sakaw Terrace as an idea was first conceived by Raymond Swonek when the City of Edmonton offered GEF Seniors Housing a surplus school site in the Mill Woods area. After seeing the plot of land being offered for a new affordable seniors housing development, he immediately pictured a building unlike anything GEF had ever attempted before.

“Mill Woods was really lacking affordable seniors housing,” says Swonek. “There was a huge need for lodge rooms and apartments catered to seniors with a low- to moderate-income. With there being such a huge need in this neighbourhood, I knew I had to go big – bigger than anything we had ever built before.”

Ambitions ran high for Sakaw Terrace. As the project development team began fleshing out the details that would make up this new seniors complex, Swonek started seeing something even better than he initially imagined. The designers and architects made space for 70 lodge rooms and 88 apartments, two outdoor courtyards, a communal greenhouse, a theatre room, a salon, and underground and above ground parking. Swonek explains that deciding what to include in this new building wasn't a decision solely made by any one group.

“For any new building project, we always go out to the community and make sure they're involved with as much of the process as they want to be,” says Swonek. “The community talked a lot about how much they like their green space, so between the courtyards and the greenhouse, we made sure to include as much green space as we possibly could.”

GEF began appearing at farmer's markets and other community events to help keep up the momentum for Sakaw Terrace, only to be met by lines of people hoping to get on the waiting list early. With excitement running high in the Mill Woods community for Sakaw Terrace, the project team knew it needed to deliver something special and started looking to its environmental impact assessments for more inspiration.

“We decided to own more of the environmental stewardship around a project like [Sakaw Terrace],” Swonek says.

“It's important that what we build is sustainable and that we reduce our carbon footprint without compromising on our principle to provide great housing options for seniors.”

The team looked at sustainability in two ways, with the first being environmental. Sakaw Terrace was built with a combined heat and power unity (CHP), which better uses natural gas utilities by using the power and heat generated more efficiently. Estimates show that the CHP will reduce carbon gas emissions by 530 tons a year.

The other side of Sakaw Terrace's sustainability is the financial side, which is helped by the CHP offering a savings of around \$80,000 that GEF can reallocate to operations and services for seniors. But Swonek explains that they wanted to take financial sustainability a step further with a housing model he typically only sees in Europe.

“Sakaw Terrace is the first building in Alberta to offer a mixed-income model for housing in Western Canada,” Swonek says. “Thirty per cent of the suites in Sakaw Terrace are going to be offered to any senior, regardless of income, at a market value. We can then use the profits from the market value suites to keep funding the operations at Sakaw Terrace, making it a completely self-sustaining building.”

Though the financial side of sustainability is appealing to GEF Seniors Housing (especially being a not-for-profit), Swonek's more proud of the communal aspects of these innovations.

“What our efforts amount to is making Sakaw Terrace more accessible to the 20,000 seniors currently living in the Mill Woods area,” Swonek says. “As people age, they want to stay in their communities. They want to be close to their families, friends, and the services they're comfortable with. At the end of the day, the people have to come first. This is going to be someone's home, and that needs to stay front of mind before anything else.”



Quick facts about GEF Seniors Housing

GEF operates & manages

Seniors Housing
14220-109 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5N 4B3
780.482.6561 • www.gef.org

29 apartment buildings
2 duplex communities
10 lodges



GEF Seniors Housing is the largest provider of subsidized seniors housing in **ALBERTA**

GEF is a not-for-profit registered charity



OUR MISSION Leaders in friendly, affordable, secure housing & services for seniors



The year **GEF** began serving seniors & their families

3,500 seniors call **GEF** home. Our measure of success is our residents' happiness, continued health & their families peace of mind.

Sakaw Terrace, set to open in 2019, saw approximately **900** Edmontonians work on the overall construction project.

75% of **GEF** residents have incomes of less than **\$2,000** per month

65% of residents are over **75** years of age
8 residents are over **100** years of age

500 Albertans are employed by **GEF**



9 Years **GEF** has been recognized as a Best Small and Medium Employer in Canada by our employees



Since 2000, **GEF** has received the COR for workplace **Health & Safety** through the Partnerships in Injury Reduction program

GEF buildings are certified Crime Free Multi-Housing properties by the Edmonton Police Service



THE APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Completing Your Application

Your first step is to decide which type of housing you would like to apply for:

- Self-Contained Apartment
- Lodge
- Duplex Home
- Affordable Apartment

Applicants may only apply for one of the four housing types. Descriptions for each of these housing types are included in this brochure.

Choose the location(s) you want and then complete the appropriate application form for the type of housing you've selected.

Applications are available:

- at any GEF lodge or apartment
- on the GEF website at www.gef.org
- by mail. Contact us at 780-482-6561 or housinginfo@gef.org

2. Submitting Your Application

After you have completed your application form, it must be sent to the building you have indicated as your first choice. Completed applications are processed at the applicant's first-choice building.

Submit your application to your first-choice building by:

- Dropping it off or mailing it in
- Scanning and emailing it to the site office. Contact the site for more information.

Tip: Addresses are listed in the Housing Information Brochure below each building. Please visit the website or call 780-482-6561 to request a brochure, or if you have any questions.

3. Interview Process

After your application has been processed, you will be contacted to schedule a housing interview. Interviews take place at your first-choice building and are conducted by the Site Manager. Interviews must be done in person and cannot be conducted over the phone.

4. Waitlist Process

If your application is approved, you will be added to the waitlist. An approved applicant can be on one or multiple location waitlists for certain housing. Applicants only need to be interviewed once and approval is given for all the locations you have selected on your application form.

Tip: Please contact the building directly to inquire about specific wait times. Waitlists are based on need. GEF does not provide emergency housing.



Seniors Housing

Central Services
14220-109 Avenue, Edmonton, AB T5N 4B3
Tel: 780-482-6561 • Fax: 780-488-3561
Email: housinginfo@gef.org
www.gef.org

MISSION

Positively influencing seniors' quality of life.

VISION

Leaders in friendly, affordable, secure housing and services for seniors.

VALUES

Our values define how we serve and build relationships with our seniors' community, as well as our workplace family.

Respect

Dignity • Appreciation • Courtesy

Integrity

Trustworthy • Honest • Ethical

Well Being

Happiness • Health • Balance

Accountability

Responsibility • Commitment • Ownership