



Creating a sense of community



Message from
Leanne Gugenheimer
—Executive Director

Touchmark’s community has rapidly expanded over the last few months, and there has been tremendous growth. Everywhere there are new neighbours and friendships occurring.

In welcoming newcomers, there was a need for beginning a Residents’ Council with nominated executive committee members. In the previous residents’ meeting, a “nominating committee” was formed to recruit key individuals who wanted to take the initiative and later to be voted for key roles. The positions filled include president, vice president, secretary, events committee, and friendship ambassadors.

The purpose of the Residents’ Council is to provide opportunities for residents and families to contribute to Touchmark by promoting our community spirit. We are excited to see the enthusiasm and interest amongst residents. Touchmark is a warm and welcoming community, due in part to the people living and working here. We can accomplish great things together.

The Health Services Neighbourhood opens

We are very pleased to announce that on February 12, Touchmark opened its doors to the Health Services

Neighbourhood. Over the last couple of months, there has been plenty of anticipation, staff recruitment and orientation, construction and cleanup, decorating, and arranging of equipment and furniture. Touchmark has worked with the Capital Health Authority to make this project a reality.

The Health Services Neighbourhood features modern equipment; spacious, bright dining rooms; cozy family rooms; patio access to gardens; wide, open hallways; and large windows, positioned low in resident rooms. This neighbourhood will be a wonderful, warm, and caring home to 64 people. There are 52 private deluxe suites and 12 shared suites, which can conveniently accommodate couples.

All admissions will be coordinated directly through Capital Health’s Central Assessment and Placement Services (CAPS). Public tours will be available toward the end of March.

.....

Optimism affects global wellness

by **Marge Coalman, EdD**
Vice President of Wellness & Programs, Touchmark

In the last five years, a whole new field has developed in the world of psychological research. It is the study of positive psychology. While that may sound like something New Age or “soft” in the annals of research study and outcomes, it is in fact becoming very important in trying to figure out how the global population can cooperate and work together

“I think we are our memories more than we are the sum total of our experiences.”

—*Martin Seligman, psychologist and writer*

for the greater good of all.

A study of positive emotion, character and institutions by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi in 2000 included data

from around the world and over time. From the studies of the ancient Greeks to the Psychology departments in today’s universities, the conclusions turned out to be the same. Scientific evidence verifies long-held beliefs—key strengths in the optimistic personality are linked to life satisfaction in regard to a life well lived and are a high index of self-esteem and good mental health. In addition to individual influence, there is a great impact on the world culture when these principles and strengths are applied to leaders and learners.

A 2005 *Time* magazine cover story, “The New Science of Happiness,” featured Seligman and highlighted eight simple steps to lift your level of happiness, based on the research of psychologist Sonja Lyubomirsky:

1. **Count your blessings.**
2. **Practice acts of kindness.**
3. **Savor life’s joys.**
4. **Thank a mentor.**
5. **Learn to forgive.**
6. **Invest time and energy in friends and family.**
7. **Take care of your body.**
8. **Develop strategies for coping with stress and hardships.**

Look for additional information and scientific investigation of the phenomenon of positive psychology in an upcoming article I wrote for the International Council on Active Aging’s *Journal of Active Aging*. (A link on the Touchmark Web site will be available following publication.)

Talk with Touchmark Life Enrichment/Wellness Director Kathy Brown for immediate access to support and opportunities to implement positive influence. The possibilities for optimistic results are unlimited.

Enjoy maintenance-free living

by **Catherine Douglas**
—Sales Consultant

The Sales team is anxious for spring to arrive. Winter has been busy and productive, but we know that spring will be even better! The Grande is steadily filling. Welcome to all the newest residents. The Sales team has been lucky to know you from the moment you started looking at Touchmark. Now the rest of the community will meet you and begin the building of new friendships.

It’s a wonderful process for us when people come through the door; we can already see how much they’ll love being part of Touchmark. Whether they will live in a bungalow at The Estates, a suite in the Grande, or a suite in our beautiful new Health Services Neighbourhood, we know they will be welcomed by this exceptional community. Each new resident brings a new history, a new sense of humour, new talents, and new smiling faces.

This month, we want to thank all of you for just being yourselves. You are truly the highlight of every tour and the biggest reason for others to choose Touchmark.

Upcoming events

Saturday, March 17, 3:30 pm—St. Patrick’s Day happy hour. Fireside Café.

Tuesday, March 20, 9 am—Men’s Breakfast Club. Please sign up for this event. Private Dining Room.

Wednesday, March 21, 11 am—Jackie Ray Greening will talk about the 2007 Ford World Men’s Curling Championship. Marquis Room.

Wednesday, March 28, 2 pm—Humor/Life Balance Workshop, presented by the “Professional Humor Dude” Billy Streat, PhD, CPCC, CLL.

Join the Seated Yoga class

Awaken your body and mind and experience the well-being and fulfillment that Seated Yoga brings. Many people take yoga classes for stress management, to relax, or to increase flexibility. Join Kathy on Mondays and Fridays in the East Activity Room at 10 am.



Singing telegrams touch hearts

Residents and staff enjoyed an enlivening Valentine's Day Singing Telegram event. Residents ordered telegrams for other residents; staff ordered telegrams for staff and residents; and even family and friends sent telegrams to loved ones. Each recipient enjoyed a singing telegram sung by staff and received a carnation. A telegram cost \$2, and all proceeds were donated to the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Some people were surprised and flattered, and others were even brought to tears when the chorus began to sing. A local TV station stopped by to record the festivities, and the video clips were showcased on the noon, the 6:30 pm, and 11 o'clock news.



Let Your Spirit Soar

Writers, photographers, and poets live and create in Touchmark communities, and Touchmark is featuring some of this talent and creativity in each newsletter. The Let Your Spirit Soar theme for March is a humor and laughter poetry feature.

Writing a limerick

by Bill MacCallum
—Resident

*A limerick is rather dismaying
If you wrote one you'd know what I'm saying
You have only five verses
And what's even worse is
The result is shrugged off as mere playing*

*They all call it Touchmark at Wedgewood
Now, a Creek without water's a Falsehood
Could we please make a rink
Of that dry gulch? I think
It's a plan that is more than a Touch Good.*

*Teaching English to kids was no bore.
We wrote stories and poems galore.
But an essay assignment
Or some such refinement
Brought shouts of "this sucks" and much more*

For April, please submit an intergenerational story—current or from the past. Deadline for this issue is March 16. For a list of the guidelines, monthly themes, and deadlines, please contact Touchmark Life Enrichment/Wellness Director Kathy Brown.

.....

Meet your neighbours at the Ravine Café

The Ravine Café is abuzz with activity and socializing every afternoon between 3 and 5 pm.

Meet for a game of cards or enjoy a cup of coffee or tea while reading the daily paper. If you are new to the Touchmark family, come and make a new acquaintance.

My Story

by Linda Celmainus
—Resident

I came to Canada from Latvia in 1948 with my husband and our three young children. Our fourth child was born the following year.

In Latvia, my husband and I attended university in the 1930s; we married in 1937 and were creating a good life together with our young family. But that came to an abrupt end with the invasion of our country by both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany during World War II. In early 1945, we boarded a fishing boat in the middle of the night and crossed the Baltic Sea to Sweden. Three years later, we set sail for North America on a passenger liner. We were full of hope for our new life in Canada, and I imagined that everything would soon be fine. What an awakening!

To be able to speak freely without fear was probably the one freedom that we valued the most as new Canadians.

We arrived in New York and took a train to Montreal and then to Red Deer to meet our sponsor, a friend of my husband from Latvia. We also were met by a prairie blizzard—such cold and snow! The friends who sponsored us were poor, and I mean poor! Other people in their position would never have considered sharing their home with a family of five and helping them immigrate to Canada. We were very grateful to them. As I look back, I appreciate them even more. But at the time, I was in shock; I had never lived in such conditions. During those first weeks, oh, how I wished that I could just go back to Sweden. Canada seemed to be such a backward country.

But Canadians treated us well. They were friendly and helpful, even though we couldn't speak their language. I learned to speak English by reading magazines and listening to the radio, and I later joined a community club. I have been an avid reader (in English) ever since.

As immigrants adjusting to life here in those early years, my husband and I valued our Canadian citizenship highly. Latvians have always lived under the threat of control by neighbouring countries, so I was brought up to understand the meaning of freedom. To be able to speak freely without

fear was probably the one freedom that we valued the most as new Canadians.

If I were to share my thoughts on citizenship with young Canadians, I would encourage them to get to know their country and to become educated citizens. When our 9-year-old son started school in Alberta, he was amazed to discover that many of his classmates did not know who their provincial leader was—even though Premier Manning had been in office for five years. I have noticed that some Canadians I meet know very little of the geography of their own country. It would seem some don't care, but perhaps they take their country for granted, because they have never known anything different.

I also would urge young Canadians to appreciate their country. My husband always used to say, "I am Latvian by birth and Canadian by choice." Perhaps people can only truly value their rights and freedoms when they have not always had them. I hope people appreciate the benefits of their citizenship and the opportunities to work and to receive an education. Although we came to Canada with nothing, my husband was always so proud that we made a good life for ourselves without financial help from anyone, and our four children all received university educations. (There were no programs for immigrants when we arrived, but the language classes offered today are a very good idea.)

When I first arrived here, there were times when I wanted to return to Europe, because life was so very difficult for us in those early years. But now, I am happy that we took the risk to come to Canada. My Canadian citizenship is very important to me.



In the dark, we saw two litters of Bichon and Shitzus running around the kitchen island. One puppy came to us and refused to leave us—and Muffin came home with us. She quickly took over our household, and since then, she has ruled the roost at Touchmark.

.....

Meet Touchmark's first resident dog, Muffin

by June Clarkson
—Resident

We have had dogs all our lives—from big to small. When our last dog died, we decided no more dogs. Later, our daughter and her daughter visited us, and on Saturday night before they left, we said we had to have a dog. Telephone lines were ringing at 8:30 pm. We were on our way to a farm in Red Deer, which was very difficult to find.