

Sunrise residents pool artistic talents for Alzheimer Society of York Region



Residents of Aurora's Sunrise retirement community recently pooled their artistic talents to raise nearly \$1,500 for the Alzheimer Society of York Region.

Last month, residents, under the guidance of artist Sergey Wain-Fellowes, a volunteer art leader within the community, welcomed family members and dignitaries to their Golf Links Drive gardens for the inaugural "Art in the Park.?"

The afternoon was a Paint & Sip affair which included an art class, drinks, and, when all was said and done, a charity art sale. There was no particular price for each painting, explains Sunrise Executive Director Sarah Soleymany, but the sales of more than \$1,400 exceeded all expectations.

"As part of the creative activities Sunrise does, our residents have an arts session every Thursday," she says. "Sergey, our artist, has been volunteering for the community for many years now and he dedicates his time spending Thursday afternoons doing arts with our residents. It's amazing how much they have flourished and learned, so the majority of pieces were done by our residents in the last year, some as recently as the week before, and we thought it would be a great idea to partner with the Alzheimer Society, get them involved and get our families more acquainted.

"Prior to COVID, we had a lot more education sessions but COVID derailed everything. This is getting back to the routine of things. We also have a Memory Neighbourhood on our third floor, which is dedicated to Alzheimer's and dementia, so it is very close to our hearts and we thought it would be a great cause to pay it forward."

Before residents come to their memory floor, she adds, they have often used the Alzheimer Society's day programs.

"It's a great resource that they give to the residents in Aurora and the community that has the need. Magda, our activities and volunteer coordinator, had this vision and she brought it to life in a great way," Soleymany continues. "She wanted an 'Art in the Park' and she thought what better way to showcase [the grounds] where residents go for walks and fresh air to display their artwork and give a chance for the community to come for a time. They sipped some drinks and painted away the day."

Sunrise residents, she says, "are up for anything fun" and when staff approached them with the idea they were more than excited about the opportunity to do something they love for a great cause.

"For us, [partnerships] are really huge, not just for us as a business but for residents to involve them more in community life, giving back, and living with generosity? those are all part of Sunrise's programming standard and we feel it is really important to live with

purpose for our residents, another part of Sunrise's signature. Anything that we can involve our residents, to give them that sense of purpose, a project, we're definitely up for that.

?The feedback we got [from the Sip & Paint] was really good from our residents, the families who were involved, and they just said it was a really fun and refreshing day to be able to participate in something like that. COVID, unfortunately, put a damper on a lot of the activities so it is really appreciated by our residents to be involved again in the day-to-day life of their loved ones.

?A huge, huge gratitude for everybody who took the time out of their busy Saturday to join us for this amazing cause. We truly appreciate it, their presence, and also their donations ? it's meant to us more than we can actually put into words, to be honest. It was a proud moment for us to present that to the Alzheimer Society and they were equally grateful for the partnership as well. A sincere thank you to everyone who joined, those who couldn't join us and still contributed ? it is very appreciated.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter