

Seniors Speak Winter Newsletter

Seniors Speak connects you to what is happening at Toronto Seniors Housing. Inside, you will find stories that showcase the diversity of our vibrant communities, as well as information for tenants.

As always, we welcome your thoughts on these newsletters. If you have a story that you would like featured, or ideas on what you would like to see in a future issue, please let us know by emailing us at: SeniorsSpeak@torontoseniorshousing.ca.



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Jessie's food market offers grocery shopping at home for tenants

For many seniors, grocery shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic can be a challenging experience. Navigating mobility issues, and social distancing to grab a few basic necessities involves a lot of mental, physical and emotional preparation. Luckily for the residents of Glen Stewart Acres, fellow resident Jessie M. saw an opportunity to lighten some of the stress of shopping by starting a food market in 2019.

Jessie partnered with Community Centre 55 (www.centre55.com) to address food inequity in her community. Funded by the centre, and run by Jessie and a small group of volunteers from the centre, the farmers' market pop-up provides assistance for grocery shopping to tenants who need it. The market sells fresh, mostly Ontario-grown fruits and vegetables at fair prices.

On the first Wednesday of every month, you can find Jessie at the helm welcoming tenants to the market outside Glen Stewart Acres. Watching tenants come down and shop for farm-fresh produce in their home gives her joy. "That's all the money in the world for me," she says. "It's just my way of saying thank you to the universe. This is a perfect opportunity to use the skills I have to help people. So why not do it?"



The market is currently on hold for the winter until renovations are completed for the community room. Jessie is already planning for expansion and thinking of ways to increase participation, particularly from those with mobility challenges. "I'm a logistics girl by nature, so I'm up for any challenge," she says.



"It's just my way of saying thank you to the universe. This is a perfect opportunity to use the skills I have to help people. **So why not do it?"**

-Jessie M.

Jessie's story provides just one example of the many successful partnerships happening between tenants and community organizations in improving access to food for seniors. A number of organizations, such as **Food Share**, also conducted surveys related to food security to get a better understanding of the need for future programs within our buildings. Organizations such as **Sai Dham Food Bank** have made their 24/7 foodbank services available to tenants across our portfolio who may have financial or mobility challenges through their intake line: 437-988-4422. **The Red Cross** also operates a Mobile Food Bank for tenants who have mobility issues or are homebound through their intake line at: 416-236-3180.

Our goal over the next year is to align existing community programs, including food security initiatives, across our four regions to enhance tenants' access to services. If you are interested in more information about how to get programs like these into your building, please email communities@torontoseniorshousing.ca or contact your Seniors Services Coordinator.

R-PATH reports: Accessibility goals for seniors

The Responsible Personal Accessibility in Toronto Housing (R-PATH) Committee continues to work with Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation (TSHC) to make your community accessible for all tenants.

In this article, we'd like to share our priorities this winter:

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) training for TSHC staff and volunteers. Cathy Birch, the Chair of R-PATH, has created this training to cover AODA requirements. Sessions focus on the work done in TSHC to make sure that committees and meetings are accessible.
- Accessibility Is for You. R-PATH has created a package for tenants with medical needs who need their unit modified to function better. The package walks you through the Accessibility Program and to get your unit modified, the forms you need, and each step in the process. You can obtain a copy of this package from your Seniors Services Coordinator.
- Moving current accessibility projects forward to completion in a timely way.



If you have any questions about R-PATH or would like to join our tenant-led committee, please contact Cathy Birch at (647) 201-7941 or cbirch619@msn.com.

Ending each day on a high note: Meet Misha and Tamara!

For Misha and Tamara I., music has been a constant throughout their lives.

The 25-year residents of Sheppard Place first met at a children's camp in Latvia where Tamara, a professionally trained accordion player, was teaching. They quickly bonded over their shared love for music and fell in love.

After immigrating to Toronto in 1996, the couple yearned to stay connected to their roots and keep their musical traditions alive. Living at Sheppard Place allowed them to connect with a large population of Russian seniors who reside there. In fact, the community surrounding Sheppard Place in North York is home to one of the largest Jewish Russian communities in Ontario.



Up until the COVID-19 pandemic, they were performing at the Bernard Betel Centre, a local nonprofit community centre. Their chemistry is evident as you watch them joyously perform duets – Tamara playing the accordion while Misha sings and dances alongside her – entertaining the many seniors, newcomers and Holocaust survivors who visit the centre.

Over the years, they've seen many new faces come into their building. "Sometimes junior seniors don't connect with the senior tenants," said Tamara. "Music helps to overcome this barrier".

Your community at a glance



Your community at a glance



Senior Tenants Advisory Committee update

Senior Tenants Advisory Committee (STAC) members continue to be busy adding an important tenant perspective to many Toronto Seniors Housing projects and initiatives.

Over the last few months, STAC members:

- Contributed to the review of tenant-facing policies, including Tenant Action Funds and Use of Space
- Discussed the roles of the Seniors Services Coordinator (SSC) and the Engagement Community Services Coordinator (CSC)
- Discussed a recent report on language barriers by the Wellesley Institute (www.wellesleyinstitute.com/publications/language-barriers), offering insights and ideas on how to overcome some of the barriers at Toronto's social housing
- Provided feedback for the City of Toronto's evaluation report on the Integrated Service Model, which will be presented at the upcoming Toronto Seniors Housing Board meeting
- Received training on accessibility from Cathy Birch, chair for the Responsible Personal Accessibility in Toronto Housing (R-PATH) Committee
- Provided input on Toronto Seniors Housing Interim Strategic Directions

Many members are also participating alongside other tenants in the Quality Improvement Projects working groups that launched at the end of 2022, which cover pest management, safety and security, and staff and tenant relations.

Please email STAC@torontoseniorshousing.ca if you want more information, are interested in joining STAC, or would like a member of the committee to contact you. **Members welcome senior tenants' input.**

Tax credits and benefits for seniors

As of July 2021, anyone receiving rent-geared-to-income (RGI) **must** file taxes every year. The tax filing deadline for your 2022 tax return is May 1, 2023. We will be bringing back tax clinics in many of our buildings this year. Posters with more information will be put up in the coming weeks.

When filing your taxes this year, you may be eligible for tax credits and benefits. We recommend that tenants seek advice from a tax professional before filing your taxes to determine what tax credits apply to you.

One-time top-up to the Canada Housing Benefit

You may be eligible for this new tax-free one-time payment of \$500 if your income and the amount of rent you pay qualify. The 2021 adjusted family net income requirement to qualify is \$35,000 or less for families and \$20,000 or less for individuals. The deadline to apply is March 31, 2023. Visit www.canada.ca and search “one-time Canada housing benefit” for more information.



The Ontario Trillium Benefit (OTB)

The Ontario Trillium Benefit is a tax-free payment that helps low- to moderate-income Ontario residents pay for energy costs, sales and property tax. Most Toronto Seniors Housing buildings are exempt from municipal property taxes, which may impact a tenant’s eligibility for the Ontario Trillium Benefit.



Check your building's property tax status by by visiting www.torontohousing.ca/taxexempt, or calling the Tenant Support Centre at 416-945-0800 to confirm whether your building is tax exempt. Visit www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-trillium-benefit for more information.

Disability Tax Credit (DTC)

A senior suffering from a severe and prolonged impairment in physical or mental functions may fit the criteria for the Disability Tax Credit. Visit www.bit.ly/2OF88aF to see if you’re eligible.



Senior discounts in Toronto

From transportation fare to film tickets, seniors are eligible for discounts in many places in Toronto. Make the most out of your benefits by taking advantage of the special discounts available to individuals age 55 and above.

Retail:

Shoppers Drug Mart: Save 20% every Thursday (65+)

Rexall: Save 20% every Tuesday (55+)

TELUS: Discount varies (65+)

Rogers: 'Connected for Success' program offers high-speed low-cost internet to tenants of many Toronto Seniors Housing buildings.

Pet Value: Save 10% (60+) last Thursday of every month (must be a valid Your Rewards / VIP Plus member)

Bulk Barn: Save 10% every Wednesday (65+)

M&M Food Market: Save 10% (60+) Tuesdays in-store (excluding Express locations) and online daily

Transportation and Travel

TTC: \$2.25 per ride with a PRESTO card (65+)

GO Transit: Discount varies (65+)

Via Rail: Save 10% (60+)

Entertainment

Cineplex: \$8.50 - \$10.50 per ticket (65+)

Hot Docs Film Festival (April 27-May 7): Free admission to daytime festival screenings for patrons 60+ before 5:00 p.m. Tickets are available online or at Hot Docs Ted Rogers Cinema box office (506 Bloor St W, just east of Bathurst) starting at 8:00 a.m. on the day of the screening. More information:

www.hotdocs.ca/festivals/hot-docs-festival.

TIFF Bell Lightbox Silver Screenings:

Free series bringing seniors together to connect with fellow film lovers and participate in a variety of events including peer-led film discussions, interactive workshops, and classes. More information: www.tiff.net/seniors.



Seniors Speak is available in many languages



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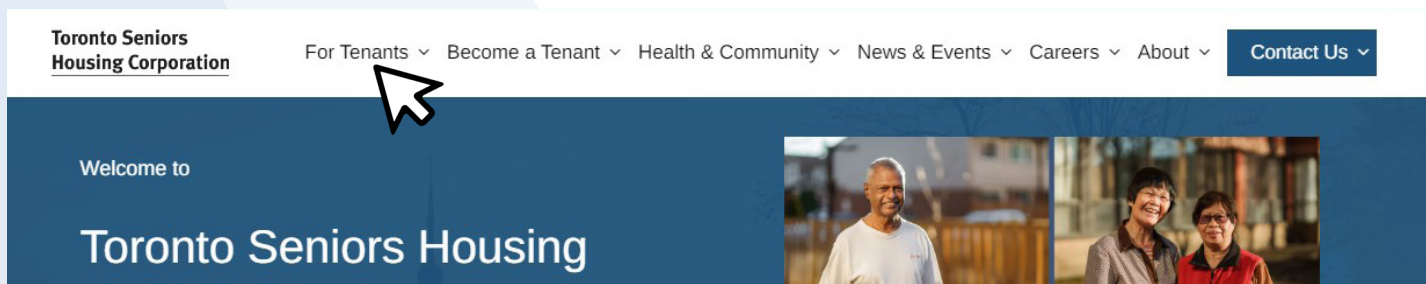
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Stay connected!



To stay connected and updated with the news and events of Toronto Seniors Housing, make sure to follow us on social media. You can find us on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. You can also learn more on our website at www.TorontoSeniorsHousing.ca.



Get in touch

Want to be featured in an upcoming newsletter? Prefer to get Seniors Speak in your email inbox? Contact us at SeniorsSpeak@torontoseniorshousing.ca.

You can call these numbers 24 hours a day, seven days a week, or reach us via email at support@torontoseniorshousing.ca.

Tenant Support Centre: 416-945-0800

Community Safety Unit: 416-921-2323

Crime Stoppers: 416-222-8477

