

At home at the Empress Kanata

By Randy Ray

Seniors have their every need filled at the Empress Kanata Retirement Residence.

“Residents often tell me ‘it’s just like living at home’ thanks to the excellent care provided by our team of friendly staff,” says marketing manager Marie Elmsley. “In every corner of the building, everything is looked after for you. We provide the best food and an amazing social program.

“If you are looking to meet new friends, enjoy new activities or get back to other activities, it is a great spot,” she says.

One-stop shopping for retirement living is how many describe life at the three-storey residence at 170 McGibbon Dr., near Terry Fox Drive and The Queensway, 15 minutes from downtown Ottawa.

Many staff members have worked at the Empress for many years, a key reason the residence has such a “homey” atmosphere.

“They are a top notch group of people; they continually impress me by going out of their way to make people feel comfortable and at home, both socially and physically,” says Elmsley.

The Empress’s reputation as one of the area’s most sought after retirement residences was enhanced in November of 2006 when it was acquired by Chartwell Seniors Housing REIT, which owns or manages many large retirement homes and long-term care facilities across Canada.

Since then, the building has been significantly upgraded and many new features added, including a family dining room and a new movie lounge. In addition, the train room was completed.

Elmsley urges people shopping for a seniors’ residence to meet the people who operate the business and examine the level of service, and note the atmosphere when they first walk through the doors. Once they’ve done their research, she’s confident they will pick the Empress.

Exceeding customers’ expectations is a key attraction for seniors who choose the Empress.

In keeping with customer service, Chartwell has just launched its new Payment Options Program. Chartwell has long realized that it can be a challenge to ensure the monthly income required to live in a retirement residence, given the rising cost of living.

“These options are designed to provide peace of mind for residents, so they have one less thing to worry about,” says Elmsley.

“Resident care is top of mind for us and we keep an eye out for this. If something does not seem right, our team automatically gets involved,” says Elmsley. “We work well together and our residents sense that. It gives comfort knowing that everyone is working for our residents to stay healthy and happy.”

On the housekeeping side, staff members ensure everything is clean and tidy and that laundry is returned the same day. If residents want their rooms cleaned in a particular way, staff members are happy to accommodate.

“We go that extra mile,” says Elmsley.

The Empress sets a new standard in retirement living by offering spacious rooms and an ideal location. Richly appointed and decorated in an elegant, traditional chateau style, the Empress is reminiscent of a beautiful mansion. It is located on 2.3 acres of pristine landscaped grounds and provides a charming retreat.

Its high standard of service is similar to the hospitality offered at quality hotels. Residents dine in the elegant Henley’s Dining Lounge, where several menu choices are offered at each sitting to please individual tastes. Chef Michael Bell is happy to cater to special diets. Breakfast is a very important meal of the day and staff realize that. Residents are offered a hot breakfast buffet and they can order whatever they wish for breakfast, from eggs to crepes.

In September, Bell was awarded the People’s Choice award for his recipe at a “quiche cook-off” at the Kanata Seniors Centre.

Nutrition is a very important aspect of life at the Empress, where the food and beverage department has created menus that are nutritious and appealing. Through careful planning, many varied diets can be accommodated.

In the Polo Lounge, residents enjoy the company of friends, relax with a beverage in front of the cozy fireplace or on Fridays listen to live entertainment or music played on the Empress’s piano.

“It is one of our main goals to provide excellent services to our residents and we are very fortunate A Celebrant is a person who is trained and certified to meet the needs of families during their time of loss. A Celebrant serves by providing a funeral service that is personalized to reflect the personality and life-style of the deceased. martin.carnahan@sympatico.ca 613.823.8194 Martin Carnahan Life Tribute Professionals to have a great team that can provide such service,” says Elmsley, who notes that regular scheduled activities run by activities director Christie May are guaranteed to keep everyone active.

These include ice-cream socials, big band afternoons, live entertainment, weekly shopping trips, arts and crafts, daily instructed exercises, afternoon games such as Yatze and evening concerts twice a month. The Empress’s motto in activities is: “Tell us what you want to do and we will make it happen and make it fun.”

Seniors who wish to stay active and fit will find a variety of activities arranged by May, who bases many programs on input from residents. The games room is a great place to enjoy a variety of games in the company of neighbours and friends; the movie room has relaxing chairs for those who wish to enjoy a movie or listen to music.

An arts and crafts studio offers a spacious area for those who wish to do crafts or learn a new skill during an organized activity and the train room has become a gathering place for residents, and their children and grandchildren.

“Our home is intergenerational in nature and the train room is one of the places that helps young and old mix and have fun,” says Elmsley, who notes that those visiting the room are often a mix of men and women in their 50s and 60s and children.”

During Seniors Month every year, the Empress runs an idol contest for seniors in the area, complete with auditions and a panel of judges. The winners travel to Toronto to compete in Senior Star, a Canada-wide talent contest run by Chartwell.

The Empress also strives to be an important member of the local Community by supporting the Kanata Food Bank, Kanata Chamber of Commerce, Kanata Seniors Centre and Shepherds of Good Hope.

People who live at the Empress are comfortable in knowing that prompt medical attention in the event of an emergency is available within easy reach with the state-of-the-art security and emergency response system provided at the Empress. Residents have emergency call buttons at their fingertips.

The residence’s nursing team consists of dedicated individuals who are committed to caring for residents and who ensure that care is provided with a great big smile

and with the respect and dignity residents deserve. Twenty-four-hour nursing and medication supervision are provided.

At its Wellness Centre, the Empress caters to residents requiring assistance in many areas of daily living, such as bathing, dressing, grooming and monitoring of medications. This ensures that as residents get older they needn't worry about moving. All services will continue to be provided under one roof and the Empress goes out of its way to provide first-rate care.

Suites are bright and cheerfully decorated with six-foot windows and individual controls for heating and air conditioning. Other standard features include blinds, wall-to-wall broadloom, colonial doors, large closets, en-suite four-piece bathrooms with safety bars, ceramic tile flooring and low-sill bathtubs for safety and easy access.

All one- and two-bedroom suites are equipped with gas fireplaces and kitchenettes, which include a microwave, refrigerator and sink. Rooms are equipped with fire sprinklers and heat and smoke detectors. Parking is complimentary, individual mailboxes are available and guest suites can be arranged for family or friends.

Because the Empress is ideally located in a quiet residential setting near the Queensway, residents enjoy easy access to a range of recreational, health and educational amenities, both in the Kanata community and in downtown Ottawa.

For more information about Empress Kanata please call Marie Elmsley today, at (613) 271-0034 or email: melmsley@chartwellreit.ca

This article originally appeared in the December 2009 issue of Forever Young Newspaper.