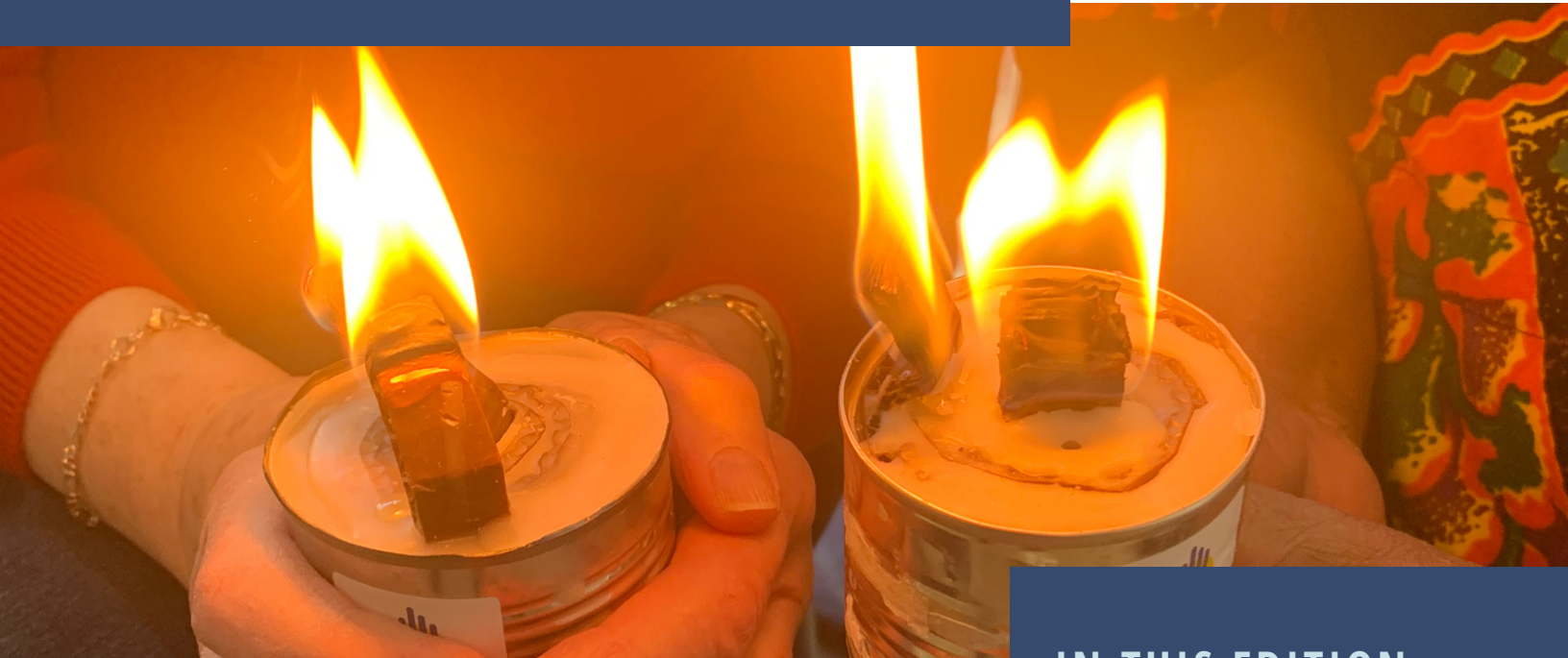


The Society NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2024 EDITION

 **Shalem**
Society for Senior Citizens Care
shalem.ca



Shalem Seniors Embrace Handmade Candles Crafted by Ukrainian Refugees, Sharing Hope and Warmth

A Heartfelt Connection with Women in Ukraine

By Michelle Vanderwerff, Shalem Recreation and Wellness Manager

What began as a pastime for a group of creative yarn lovers at Shalem became a mission to put their needles to work for a good cause.

In November 2022, a group of Shalem residents embarked on a mission to knit and crochet as many items as they could to donate to refugees from the war-torn country of Ukraine. The inspiration for their endeavour came from news of the escalating war in Ukraine, particularly the plight of refugee women and children who faced the hard winter without adequate clothing.

With many knitting enthusiasts at Shalem, it didn't take long to collect dozens of cozy yarned items, including scarves, hats, mittens, ponchos and blankets. As the collection of knitted and crocheted treasures grew, so did the sense of accomplishment and unity among the seniors. "We wanted to help women and children in Ukraine facing overwhelming circumstances and long cold winters," says Anna Kroontje, Shalem resident and organizer of the knitting and crocheting project.

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Embracing Change

By Dorothy de Vuyst, Executive Director

Most of us don't like change. We are comfortable with things as they are. But change in life is inevitable - even vital - and it can be good. Among the many changes in our lives are cultural changes, family dynamic changes, changes in our bodies,

and changes in our perspectives. As believers, we take comfort in knowing that while things may change, God does not. However, being willing to adapt to the changes in our lives - often - is needed.

Aging, too, brings many changes. At Shalem, we want to remain adaptable to the changing

(cont'd on page 2)

HEALTHY LIVING



Managing Diabetes in Older Adults

Diabetes in older adults is increasing around the world, mostly due to longer life expectancies. In Canada, 48% of people with type 2 diabetes are over 65 year of age.

What are the warning signs?

Many people have diabetes for years before they're diagnosed. This is especially true for older adults, whose symptoms can be mistaken for other age-related conditions or not apparent at all. Symptoms can include unusual thirst, frequent urination, weight changes, extreme fatigue, blurred vision, frequent or recurring infections, or tingling or numbness in hand and feet.

What is type 2 diabetes?

Insulin is produced by the body to transform sugar into energy. Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body no longer, or has difficulty, producing insulin, causing sugar to build up in the blood. Over time, this damages blood vessels and nerves and can result in severe complications such as blindness, heart disease, stroke, kidney failure or nerve damage.

Minimizing the risk

No matter how old you are you can prevent or delay the onset of type 2 diabetes by making a few simple, healthy lifestyle changes. These include not smoking, achieving a health weight, being physically active, eating balanced and nutritious meals, keeping cholesterol to a minimum, and maintaining a normal blood pressure. Adopting these changes can make a world of difference to your health and well-being, no matter what your age or condition.

Eat well!

Diet is an important part of preventing and managing diabetes but also a number of other diseases associated with aging. For many older adults, changing a lifetime of eating habits can seem daunting, but even small changes can make a difference. Focus on enjoying a variety of vegetables and fruit, lean meats, foods high in fibre, and drink plenty of water.

Be active!

Studies suggest physical activity can reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes by 50%. If you haven't exercised much in the past, it is never too late to start! Start slowly and build up gradually! Walking whenever possible or enjoying activities that involve physical exertion can help. Shalem offers daily exercise classes designed specifically for older adults. Alternatively, walking 15 - 20 minutes daily will have significant benefit.

Get support

If you've already been diagnosed with diabetes, it can be managed by following the advice of your physician and following a healthier lifestyle. Organizations such as the Canadian Diabetes Association, that can provide excellent tools to help you cope with diabetes and adopt and stick to a healthy lifestyle.

If you are concerned that you may have diabetes or have any other health concerns please contact your health care provider. Health care professionals will be able to recommend treatments specific to your needs. For residents of Shalem, please arrange an appointment with our nurse who will be able to provide further assessment and guidance.

*Adopted from 'Type 2 Diabetes: Info-sheet for Seniors', Public Health Agency of Canada

Embracing Change

(Continued from front page)

needs of our residents beyond what Alberta Health Services can offer, allowing residents to remain at Shalem as long as possible. To do this requires change. Change in our building needs, change in our approach to aging needs, change in our programming, change in our financial models, and more!

We believe in fostering an environment where older adults will find belonging and community at every stage of their aging journey. Our goal is to cultivate a community of inclusivity and compassion where residents experience peace of mind, comfort, dignity, and respect – regardless of their changing health needs, income, or resources.

We ask for your prayers and partnership in this journey as we seek both wisdom and finances. Your contributions are invaluable as we undergo these meaningful changes.

“Diabetes is a great example whereby, giving the patient the tools, you can manage yourself very well.”

— Clayton M. Christensen,
Influential business theorist & diabetic

Did You Know?

source: www.diabetes.ca

Diabetes contributes to:

- 30% of strokes
- 40% of heart attacks
- 50% of kidney failure requiring dialysis
- Is the leading cause of blindness

Harmony for Healing: The Therapeutic Blessings of Music

By Pam Eike, Shalem Marketing & Communications Coordinator

“My heart, O God, is steadfast,
my heart is steadfast; I will sing
and make music.”

—Psalm 57:7

Music, with its ability to stir emotions, recall memories, facilitate communal expression, glorify God, and enhance well-being, is an integral element in our programming at Shalem. Our music program encompasses everything from musical entertainment at monthly birthday parties to singing worship hymns during weekly chapels, organizing dinner and dance evenings, and providing music memory care activities.



Young Pianists Spreading Holiday Cheer

In December, the spirit of music filled our hallway, joyously celebrating the birth of Jesus as Shalem hosted eight music-focused activities. A noteworthy highlight of the month was a piano concert by a group of homeschooled children who entertained and surprised our residents with thoughtful Christmas gift bags!

December also marked the introduction of therapeutic music classes by Heather Thirsk, owner of Eden School of Music. Thirsk is a welcome addition to Shalem, offering sing-a-longs, name that tune, music reminiscing, movement and music, as well as concerts featuring hymns and popular music of the decades. Check our activity calendar for music activities.

Volunteer Opportunities!

Join our team of dedicated volunteers in assisting with exercise classes, building and ground projects, crafts, plus other social activities.

Help us positively impact the well-being of our community at Shalem!

For more information email recreation@shalem.ca

Aging in Place Initiative

By Joanne Bouma, RN MN, Shalem Board Member

Over the past year, Shalem has embarked on the journey of developing an "Aging in Place" standard. The vision is to have residents remain in their home and in the Shalem community as they age and require more support for daily living. That support can be delivered at different levels and in a variety of ways depending on the individual needs of the resident. This was first presented at the AGM in the spring and was followed by forming a committee consisting of the Executive Director, the Recreation and Wellness Manager and three nurses affiliated with Shalem. The committee identified some initial steps and after exploring several options, the decision was made to partner with Longevity Care, a local senior care organization that was already established within Shalem and shares our same beliefs and values.

The initiative kicked off by gaining a better understanding of resident care needs. To do this, comprehensive health assessments have been conducted on those residents most advanced in their aging journey and care needs. Along with assessing and recognizing the strengths of the resident, the assessments include gathering health information like chronic conditions, medication review, mobility, nutrition, elimination, and sensory issues. These assessments are now informing us of the in-house health care capacity that Shalem, through the partnership with Longevity Care, requires to meet these needs. Our goal is to conduct assessments on each resident so we can be proactive in working with individuals and their family on ensuring care needs are met.

Assessments are being conducted by Izel Van Heusden, a Longevity Care staff member who was hired specifically to be placed at Shalem, along with Chelsea Jani, Director of Care at Longevity. Izel is a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) with significant senior care experience and has worked in seniors homes for over 13 years prior to working at Shalem. (cont'd on page 4)



Izel Van Heusden, LPN

We Value Your Partnership! Please consider partnering with us in the following ways:

- **Renew or become a member.** For an annual contribution of \$25.00 per person, your membership will help us grow our membership base and demonstrate our community engagement to the government.
- **Help us build our Resident Care Fund.** Your donations will enable us to provide personalized care that will allow all residents of Shalem to age well in place, regardless of their financial resources.

To become a member or to make a tax-deductible donation please call our Business Office at **403-240-2800 (ext 5)** or visit our website at **shalem.ca** and click on 'Support Us'.

A Heartfelt Connection with Women in Ukraine *(cont'd from front page)*



Left: Shalem Women Sporting their Yarn Creations. Right: Ukrainian Women Embracing the Woolen Gifts

Once the assortment of items was complete, the seniors carefully packaged their creations, praying that each item would bless the soon-to-be recipients. A local Christian humanitarian organization, Samaritan's Purse, assisted in getting the knitted gifts delivered to the frontlines, to displaced Ukraine women and children in villages directly affected by the fighting.

The Ukrainian women received not just warm clothing but a tangible reminder that somewhere in the world, there were individuals who cared. "The clothes really gave a lot of joy in Ukraine," says Anna Zatsepina with Samaritan's Purse. "It really showed the women in Ukraine that there are other ladies who give their hearts and time for their cause. I believe one bag of these knitted items gives more spiritual support than a truck full of supermarket goods."

As a token of appreciation, the Shalem seniors were given some hand-crafted candles made by Ukrainian refugees and volunteers in Warsaw.

These simple candles were used in Ukraine during the winter months when most of the country was without electricity, providing light, heat, and warmth to many displaced people who found themselves homeless during this cold and dark season. "When I saw these being made on one of my trips, I thought your knitting angels would appreciate them and be reminded of their act of kindness and their connection to those in Ukraine when they see them," says Zatsepina.

Women of the Shalem Knitting and Crocheting Club expressed their deep gratitude and how deeply moved they were by the candles. Despite being separated by continents and circumstances, these two groups of women, united as children of God, discover their shared humanity through the warmth of yarn and candlelight.



Ukrainian women receiving knitted gifts from Shalem residents.

Aging in Place Initiative *(Continued from Page 3)*

In addition to the assessments, Izel has already proven to be indispensable through follow-up visits with residents who have just returned from the hospital, in-suite visits to those who are not feeling well, providing consult on health concerns, attending to falls, as well as numerous other health incidents.

As you can imagine, there is a cost associated with offering additional care support. As more is learned about the individual needs of residents and the community, Shalem will be able to determine costs and how this can be managed. The staff and the Board feel that having support resources available for those who require it, is a foundational aspect of successfully implementing the Aging in Place philosophy.

Want to know more? Join us on **Tuesday, January 23 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm** to meet the Longevity Care team and learn more about our aging in place initiative. We will be further unveiling new wellness initiatives tailored to enrich the lives of our residents – and provide peace of mind to families. Refreshments and dessert provided!

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