

# The Society NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2023 EDITION

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



*Photo of past resident Florence Lowry meeting with Art Instructor Janelle Reitsma to discuss the illustrations for her book.*

## Florence's Legacy: A Book of Poems

By Henrietta Koning

C. S. Lewis's famous quote, "You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream," almost sounds trite in this era of peak baby boomer retirement, but the words continue to inspire.

Shalem resident Florence Lowry embodied this. During the isolating days of the Covid-19 pandemic, the 90 year-old decided to make the best of a miserable situation and in her words, "get doing something." She had always dreamed of writing a book of poems for children so she penned eight poems about baby animals – each verse rhyming and in a gentle, pleasant way, teaching animal facts, a reflection of Florence's lifelong career as an elementary school teacher. For example, did you know a grown polar bear weighs one thousand pounds?!

In the foreword of the book, Florence shares that she wrote her poems for a potential great grandchild, stating, "I am envisioning a mother reading this book to her child and showing the pictures and later learning the words." To illustrate the poems she cut out images of the animals and pasted them appropriately. *(cont'd on page 4)*

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## Aging is MORE...

By Dorothy de Vuyst, Executive Director

Like it or not, eventually we will all age. And in a world that values youth and strength, aging is often not an easy journey. But God values all stages of life and the Bible often references giving honour and

respect to 'our elders.' I specifically like the verse in Job 12 where Job states as he converses with God, "Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?" I know I am continually blessed by the wisdom and understanding among the residents of Shalem! *(cont'd on page 2)*

# HEALTHY LIVING



## Medication Management

By Joanne Bouma, RN MN

As we age, medications can be a blessing but also a challenge.

Older adults are living longer with multiple health conditions and as a result, the number of medications add up quickly. From primary health care providers, specialists, medications purchased over the counter, natural remedies, and 'the pills my sister gave me because it worked for her,' many older adults are taking five or more medications. This use of multiple medications is referred to as 'polypharmacy'.

The more medications an older adult takes increases the risk of adverse effects such as a fall or a change in cognitive ability. While medications are needed to manage health conditions, there should be a regular review to ensure medications and dosages are correct, still required, compatible with each other, and have not expired.

As we age, our bodies also change and weaken. A decrease in the function of our kidney, liver, heart, stomach, or bowels significantly impacts the effectiveness of a medication and doses should be individually tailored to avoid adverse effects. One amount of medication is not the same for everybody and if a drug is not compatible with other medications, it can decrease or exaggerate the effect of another. When starting a new medication, the saying goes "start low and go slow!" Start with a lower dose and increase doses slowly, while assessing for side effects.

In older adults, nutrition also plays a key role in medication management as both under and over nourishment impacts the positive or negative effect of medications. As well issues with vision, hearing, memory, and reasoning can

impact how well people are able to manage multiple medications.

There are several strategies that can be used to ensure medications are taken safely:

- Use prepackaged pharmacy blister packs.
- Don't have pills that have to be split in half.
- Ask for instructions to be repeated if you do not understand.
- Ask for larger print instructions.

It is important to work closely with a healthcare professional to make sure what you are taking is safe, effective, and manageable to maintain your health and live well. If you think you are experiencing a side effect of a medication, be sure to ask your doctor or health care professional.

*Did you know that Shalem now offers access to pharmaceutical support onsite? If you or your loved one is struggling with side effects of medication, please see our monthly calendar for 'Ask a Pharmacist' and book an appointment with Boon Khoo, who is able to adjust medications as needed.*

(Adapted from Dick, T., and Buttaro, K. (2020). Case Studies in Geriatric Primary Care & Multimorbidity Management)

## Aging is MORE... *(cont'd from Page 1)*

For almost 40 years, Alberta has celebrated Seniors' Week, to recognize the many contributions older adults have made and continue to make to enhance the quality of life in Alberta. A variety of activities around Calgary celebrated and highlighted seniors from June 5-11, with the theme, 'Aging is More.'

At Shalem, we celebrate 'aging is more' all year round! MORE of the things our residents love. MORE movement. MORE music. MORE learning. MORE celebrating. MORE community.

But most of all we want residents to experience MORE of God's grace and love. Resting in the knowledge, that even in the midst of aging and weakening bodies, God's faithfulness gives us MORE peace and joy.

Join us in this mission by celebrating the seniors in your life!

“More and more people are living into their 80s and 90s than were ever expected.”

Parminder Raina, Canada Research Chair in Geroscience at McMaster University

## Did You Know?

The population aged 85 and older is one of the fastest-growing age groups today. A person between 90 and 99 is called a nonagenarian. A person between 100 and 109 is called a centenarian. Here at Shalem, we are thrilled so many residents are able to age in place. We currently have 56 residents that are nonagenarian and one, Marion Kettleleson, who is a centenarian. She turned 101 on June 14th.

## MORE Services...

With our expanding wellness programs, it's easier for Shalem residents to be proactive about their health and well-being.

We now offer:

- Hearing Clinics
- Mobile Dental Hygienist
- Reflexology
- Massages
- Blood Pressure Clinics
- Pharmacy Services
- Chaplain Care
- Counseling
- Brain Health Coaching
- Age Related Learning

If you would like to learn more about our programs please call Shalem or email [recreation@shalem.ca](mailto:recreation@shalem.ca).

## MORE Care...

In addition to the Federal grant received for the Art and Exercise space in the Manor, we are excited that we have also received a \$90,000 grant from the Federal government to provide us with the capacity to develop personalized care plans for those residents needing more support. The funding will allow us to hire a key health position in order to deliver training to our staff as well as resource and engage residents and families in decisions of care. We continue to pursue other grants such as these to help us increase our capacity to offer continuity of care at Shalem.

## MORE Experiences...

During Seniors' Week in Calgary there were events happening all over the city. **ElderSong Concert: Seniors on the Stage!** was presented by Unison for generations 50+ and the Music Mile. A group of residents enjoyed an afternoon of music, companionship and even a visit with Elvis and Frank Sinatra. We look forward to more outings this summer with trips to the Calgary Zoo and Glenbow Ranch Park.



## Intergenerational Connections

Calgary Christian School Grade 6 - Story Writing Skills

For several years, Shalem has enjoyed collaborating with Mrs. Gooliaffs' Grade 6 class at the neighbouring school. Students studying the art of writing 'news style' articles interview some of our residents and then put pen to paper. The exercise allows students to hone their writing skills and it provides Shalem residents an opportunity to share their life stories. Every month, one of the articles is featured in our 'Shalem Showcase' newsletter. This partnership fosters intergenerational connections, builds community, and celebrates the lives and contributions of our Older Adults.



*Top three CCS Grade 6 Writers - chosen by our resident retired teachers*

## Anita Saner and Her Life Story

By Leah H., Grade 6 Student  
Calgary Christian School

Anita Saner was born on May 9, 1947 in Basel, Switzerland. She is 77 years old and lives in Shalem, a retirement home here in Calgary. She moved to Calgary because she has two brothers and lots of relatives who live here and she wanted to be closer to them. Anita has four children, two girls and two boys. She loves to make people happy and she makes them laugh.



She is a very active person who loves to do lots of things. One of the things that she loves to do is hike, she loves the outdoors. She was in a hiking club that had 25 people in her group and once she saw a bear and a moose on a hike. She loves animals and nature. In fact one of her favorite things to watch are nature shows. *(cont'd on page 4)*

## Opportunity to Support MORE Art and Action

Earlier this year, Shalem received a \$25,000 grant from the Federal government to upgrade an unused, outdated room in the Manor basement into a vibrant space for art and exercise classes. As we have further assessed the area, in order to renovate the space well, we will need additional financial support. Our goal is to match the Federal grant dollar for dollar and raise another \$25,000! Donations can be made by calling our Business Office at 403-240-2800 (ext 5) or visiting our website at [shalem.ca](http://shalem.ca).

Thank you for joining us in supporting healthy aging by providing 'ageless inspiration through art and action!'

## Florence's Legacy: A Book of Poems

(cont'd from front page)

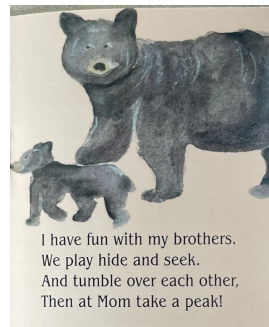
The end product was simple but in the minds of Shalem staff, the poems were worthy of a more professional looking book.

The solution for a better book was right next-door, in the art department of Shalem's neighbour, Calgary Christian School. Janelle Reitsma, the art instructor, had taught herself how to make digital books and had serendipitously just self-published her own children's book. "It was neat how it all coincided," she said. "I now had the knowledge of how to put it (the book) together." And she knew exactly who of her students had the right drawing style to complement Florence's poems.

Melissa Pike, the grade 12 art student who became the illustrator of Florence's book, met Florence over coffee and then began her illustrations; the artwork that became her senior project, where students are encouraged to look beyond themselves with an aim to "bless others."



Janelle Reitsma (L), Melissa Pike (M), Florence's Granddaughter, Jese (R)



As Melissa was bringing Florence's verses to life, suddenly and unexpectedly Florence passed away. For Melissa the loss was deeply felt and made finishing the project difficult, but her art teacher continued to support and strongly encourage her to put the book together and bless Florence's family with it.

Finally it all came together and the book was digitally published. Happy tears were shed as the book was presented to Florence's granddaughter Jese. Although she doesn't have children yet, Jese said she could imagine reading the book, along with her husband, to their future children.

"I illustrated these poems as a way to connect with Florence and create art through her amazing poems," Melissa stated. "Sadly, Florence passed away making this project even more meaningful to me because I get to share her writing with others. Even though Florence did not get to see the finished product, I hope this book can be shared with friends and family in her memory."

This collaboration between a 90-year-old poem writer, a determined teacher and a teen artist, illustrates what can be accomplished when dreams become goals and generations connect. Through their combined efforts, a book was crafted that carries Florence's words, Melissa's visual interpretations and Janelle's resolution – a legacy for the next generation.

'*Animal and Bird Poems for Children*' by Florence Lowry, illustrated by Melissa Pike, can be ordered by contacting Michelle at Shalem.

## Anita Saner and Her Life Story (Continued from Page 3)

She loves sports. She even played some when she was younger like basketball, swimming, soccer, skiing and volleyball. She also played the piano and keyboard. Some of her favourite movies and TV shows are: Little House on the Prairie, Christmas movies and nature shows. She doesn't like shooting movies but enjoys peaceful, funny ones. She worked in a hotel as a housekeeper when she was younger.

**"Nobody is perfect so you don't have to try to be perfect." - Anita Saner**

Anita lived in an orphanage from ages 10 to 18 where she got real food that she had never had before, a warm place to sleep and a bed. She was alone on Christmas and was mistreated as a child before she moved to the orphanage. She had to be tough. "If you make a mistake that is ok but if you make the same mistake twice it is not ok," says Anita.

She loves to yodel for people and she was in a yodel concert and on stage a lot.

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