

Calgary Foundation Summer 2024

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A Sanctuary for Youth

Alberta's first
mental health park

Aging Vibrantly

Supporting Calgary's
older adults

The Power of Inclusion

Advocacy, awareness
and opportunity for
all abilities

Hands Lifting Hearts

Clare Jagunna creates a community
of care for newcomer mothers





Start Where You Stand

Today, the challenges of affordable housing, food insecurity and mental health, to name just a few, can seem overwhelming. I am reminded of a wise person's words to a much younger me, "just start where you stand."

In this issue, you'll meet many people who have done just that — started where they stood, to make a difference. Whether it's supporting immigrant women from Africa on their journey of becoming new moms in a new city, creating a comfortable play and gathering place in the courtyard of a housing complex, teaching seniors how to use tablets so they can stay connected or mobilizing 250 volunteers to help neighbours in Cochrane; each of these stories started with seeing a need, then doing something about it.

The legacy of Greyson Tufts, who always did "just a little" to help others, underscores the philosophy that little contributions make a big difference. The Lee family just

started where they stood and are now making grants to causes they care about from their family Fund.

Each of us, doing just a little, collectively amounts to a lot! The founders of Calgary Foundation did just that, with 20 people each giving a little, to start the endowment for community forever. Many others have given over the past 69 years, making it possible for over \$70 million to be granted to community each year.

Enjoy the stories, and be inspired to just start where you stand. ■

Eva Friesen
President & CEO, Calgary Foundation

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Calgary Foundation acknowledges that we live, work and play on the traditional territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Kainai, Piikani), the Tsuut'ina, the Îyâxe Nakoda (Stoney Nakoda) Nations, the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta District 6 and all people who make their homes in the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta.



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Ph: 403-240-9055
redpointmedia.ca
Canadian Publications

Mail Product Agreement No. PM 40030911

Calgary Foundation Summer 2024

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Published twice yearly by the Calgary Foundation in partnership with RedPoint Media & Marketing Solutions.

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“Part of taking on leadership roles is knowing where you can add value and where you are getting out of your depth.” —*Michael Mezei*

Michael Mezei sits along the banks of the Bow River in Canmore.

A Wealth of Experience

Michael Mezei applies his investment know-how to ensure the Calgary Foundation can always support the community

By Karin Olafson • Photography by Jared Sych

When Michael Mezei retired from working as president of Mawer Investment Management in 2019, he knew exactly how he wanted to spend his leisure time. As a lover of the outdoors and physical fitness, Mezei had plans to downhill, cross-country and backcountry ski in the winter, and golf, cycle and hike in summer. But when his time on Mawer's board wrapped up a year later, Mezei took time to reflect.

Mezei considered the range of different boards he could join. "I'd built my career in the for-profit world, and decided to volunteer my time in the not-for-profit world in my retirement," he says.

That's what brought him to the Calgary Foundation. Mezei knew a few Foundation staffers and board members from attending events around town. "All the Calgary Foundation people that I met, I just thought were really capable, strong people," he says. "I felt like joining great people doing important work. I could feel good about that and hopefully add value, too."

And add value he does. Mezei started his career practicing business law, then later switched to management roles in the investment world. It was a decision partly inspired by his father's work as a financial advisor, as well as an interest in business management and leadership. Having helped lead Mawer Investment Management for just over a decade, Mezei now brings his wealth of financial, management and leadership experience to Calgary Foundation.

"Part of taking on leadership roles is knowing where you can add value and where you are getting out of your depth," he says. "I'm not a CFA, so my role in the investment industry was making sure that the team had a good working culture, good communication and HR practices, and everyone had the resources they needed, for example. The success of the firm and the success of the client, or the investment, should be aligned."

He applies this same approach to his Foundation work, initially to the investment committee, which he joined in the summer of 2020 and now chairs, then later to the board as a director in 2021. In 2022, Mezei also became a member of the audit committee. His expertise helps the Foundation manage and grow its assets so it can continually support the community, even in lean times.

"Growing the Foundation investment portfolio increases the amount that it can then put into the community on an annual basis," explains Mezei. "The Foundation model is really about legacy donations given out over time, which provides some ability to keep giving out money even in years where the local economy is challenged, and maybe other individual charities aren't able to raise much money."

Mezei says being on the Foundation board means there's always opportunities to learn and interact with people from a range of personal and professional backgrounds, and better understand the importance of having a community foundation. "I'm inspired by the energy I get from the Calgary Foundation team and board members. I've also gotten an increased appreciation of how much value Calgary Foundation brings to the table." ■

A Legacy of Little Things

Honouring the memory of Greyson Tufts and “doing just a little”

By Tomi Ajele

In the wake of unexpectedly losing her 22-year-old son Greyson Tufts, Karen Bigalke transformed tragedy into meaningful action by establishing two Funds that give back to communities in small, yet undeniably profound, ways.

Having spent much of his youth near Invermere, B.C., Greyson enjoyed the small town feel of Cochrane, Alta. At the time of his passing in July 2021, he had just moved to Calgary but was still working in Cochrane, where he felt a strong sense of community.

Listening to countless stories of how Greyson's thoughtfulness and small acts of kindness had touched the lives of so many, his family realized the significant impact he had made from doing, as he called it, “just a little.”

Some of Greyson's little things included giving his spare change to buskers, buying coffee for the person behind him in a drive-thru, staying after work to talk with a team member who was struggling in their personal life, supporting his local animal shelter, and volunteering at the Invermere food bank.

This led Karen to establish Greyson's Cupboard that provides gluten- and lactose-free products to small community food banks in recognition of Greyson's celiac disease, lactose intolerance and his passion for helping others.

In establishing the Greyson Tufts Memorial Fund, Karen wanted to make modest contributions to various causes that had mattered to Greyson, and encourage others to continue his legacy of giving back in small, but meaningful, ways.

“I love it when the Fund receives a \$5 donation because I know that's probably from one of his friends. They

didn't have a lot, but they miss him, and they think of him,” says Karen.

She initially envisioned solely having a memorial Fund, but as donations poured in, discussions naturally unfolded about establishing an endowment Fund.

Though skeptical about raising \$10,000 (the minimum required for an endowment), with the help of Greyson's brother Max Tufts and sister Ashley Wood, and the generosity of family, friends and business owners, Karen met that goal by Greyson's birthday in September 2023.

“Creating the Greyson Tufts Endowment Fund that will continue to grow in perpetuity, while supporting causes that Greyson cared about, felt like a massive achievement,” she says.

Karen decided to keep both Funds active as she wanted the memorial Fund to honour his legacy of doing “just a little” by distributing small grants throughout the year. Fittingly, the Invermere Companion Animal Network where Greyson had adopted cats and donated to over the years, received the first grant.

Both Funds preserve Greyson's legacy and redefine the essence of genuine giving. The philosophy of little contributions making a big difference defies the notion that impactful donations must be large and only come from wealthy individuals. It serves as a reminder that even the most modest gestures can hold profound significance.

As Karen likes to emphasize, particularly to young people, “You don't have to be a millionaire. All you have to do is be somebody who cares.” ■



“Creating the Greyson Tufts Endowment Fund that will continue to grow in perpetuity, while supporting causes that Greyson cared about, felt like a massive achievement.” —Karen Bigalke

Greyson Tufts with his dog, Dexter; photo courtesy of Karen Bigalke



Helping Hands and Open Hearts

By offering companionship, supporting pregnant newcomers or building gathering spaces, the following organizations, with help from Calgary Foundation, create communities where everyone can thrive

by Elizabeth Chorney-Booth



Helping Hands Society of Cochrane and Surrounding Area

>> Cochrane is a charming bedroom community where young families can afford a home, get to know their neighbours and enjoy a quiet pace of life, but that doesn't mean its residents are immune from struggle and isolation.

To support those in need, Helping Hands was founded in 2007 to connect vulnerable citizens with volunteers looking to help. As the Town of Cochrane and its surrounding communities have grown, so has Helping Hands, which now runs 10 programs facilitated by four staff members and engages 250 registered volunteers.

After operating out of Cochrane Family and Community Support Services for over a decade, the organization expanded into its own facility earlier this year. Executive director Laura McDonald says that even though Cochrane has an idyllic small-town image, she and her colleagues have realized community needs are great.

"A lot of our social issues in Cochrane are invisible," McDonald says.



Meal Teams volunteers cook batches of freezer meals, which are shared with social service partners and clients.

“For a lot of our clients entering our one-to-one programs, a huge part of what we’re doing is reducing isolation.”

—Laura McDonald



Left to right: Helping Hands staff and volunteers April Baird, Melia Hayes, Carmen Brown, Kendra Watt, Lynda Cooke and Laura McDonald preparing to do food recovery. Below: Stocking the free food shed.



"People often move here with the idea of living close to the mountains and raising a family, but life holds surprises for all of us."

Helping Hands' programs fall into two buckets. There are one-to-one programs, which connect carefully vetted volunteers with community members, particularly older adults who may be incapacitated, isolated or in need of both practical and social assistance. These services include snow removal, yard maintenance and rides to medical appointments and other engagements.

The Caring Neighbours program links community members with volunteers who can assist with small tasks around the house, grocery shopping or provide companionship.

"For a lot of our clients entering our one-to-one programs, a huge part of what we're doing is reducing isolation," McDonald says.

Another big piece of Helping Hands' work is its food security programming, which reduces food waste in the community while providing food for those in need. It operates two free food sheds with pantries and refrigerators, and a free storefront is

in the works at the new facility. Excess food from local grocery stores is delivered by volunteer food recovery partners, and anyone in the community can take whatever they need — no questions asked.

With over 10,000 hours logged last year by volunteers committed to enriching the lives of others, it's clear Helping Hands' impact is as great for its volunteers as it is for its clients.

"We're here to empower community," McDonald says. "Most of the time, we're using resources that already exist, such as people's personal time. Our job is connecting people who are willing to offer that valuable resource."

➤ Learn more at helpinghandscochrane.ca



Hands Lifting Hearts

>> **H**elping newcomers from Africa comes naturally to Clare Jagunna, who immigrated to Canada from Nigeria nearly two decades ago. Jagunna often approaches strangers with African accents in the mall or supermarket, asking if they're new to Canada and need help settling in.

Connecting newcomers with organizations serving African communities is rewarding, but she noticed a gap in providing culturally specific emotional and mental health supports to African immigrant women during pregnancy and subsequent months after giving birth.

Jagunna knows firsthand how difficult it is to be pregnant in a new country. After suffering a pregnancy loss, she gave birth to her youngest child in Canada, not long after leaving Nigeria.



“I’m so grateful to have Clare and HLH in my corner. They helped me navigate my pregnancy and postpartum. It’s been wonderful.”

—Bolanle Abudu

Bolanle Abudu (left) and Clare Jagunna with Abudu’s twin babies.

In most African countries, women struggling with pregnancy loss or dealing with a new baby would typically have family and neighbours to help them through the emotional aftermath. Not wanting other women to feel the loneliness she had in her journey, Jagunna founded Hands Lifting Hearts (HLH) in 2016 to replicate some of the community care fellow African women would experience back home.

“I was concerned. How would these women survive pregnancy without knowing anyone here and without knowing where the support is? Who are they supposed to ask?” she says.

Pregnant women from African communities often face challenges that affect their emotional well-being, including language barriers, the absence of generational family members, lack of support from spouses, and a

reluctance to challenge the advice of doctors who may not understand their culturally specific concerns.

Offering support throughout pregnancy and the postpartum period, HLH connects African women with Black doctors and volunteers from their countries of origin, who help with prenatal care and a birth plan. They also arrange for baby clothes and furniture, house cleaning, accompany women to the hospital during



“When African women come to Canada without support, they’re so overwhelmed. They don’t know who to ask for help. That’s how we help.” —Clare Jagunna

labour, and provide lactation consultation and meals after the babies come home.

Bolanle Abudu received help from Jagunna even before she became pregnant. “She connected me with others while I was trying to get pregnant so I didn’t feel alone,” Abudu says. “Throughout my pregnancy, she made sure I had everything I needed. She stood in for family back home. It’s been a blessing.”

Jagunna, who works full time in the oil and gas industry, and her team of volunteers, check in with new mothers to ensure they are not experiencing postpartum mental health issues and refer them to the proper agencies if serious problems arise.

“When African women come to Canada without support, they’re so overwhelmed,” Jagunna says. “They are tired and shocked. They don’t know who to ask for help. That’s how we help.”

Since its launch, HLH has supported over 150 women. With families immigrating to Calgary from Africa at a fast pace, she anticipates the need will only grow.

Jagunna is now training volunteers from a range of African countries to offer support in multiple languages so that all expectant African newcomers will have a village of support around them as they grow their families in their newfound home of Calgary.

➤ Learn more at handsliftinghearts.ca



Applehearts Courtyard and Gathering Space

>> Sociologists often refer to “third places” or public spaces where people feel comfortable spending time in addition to their workplaces or homes. A subsidized housing complex in the southeast neighbourhood of Applewood Park lacked an easily accessible third place for residents of all socioeconomic backgrounds and ages to meet and socialize. Though the complex had an outdoor common space, it wasn’t developed or actively maintained.

Recognizing the importance of building community connections, the team at the nearby Experience Church set its sights on creating a place where Applewood Park residents could safely gather and play. Through an existing partnership with the Calgary Housing Company, the church received a Neighbour Grant from Calgary Foundation to build the Applehearts Courtyard and Gathering Space.

The organizers consulted with tenants to determine what they wanted to see from their new third place. Given the number of young families with

children living in the housing complex, the creation of a play area was a priority. While there are playgrounds a few blocks away, they are too far for younger kids to go on their own. Plus, there were reported incidents of bullying among older kids — if parents are closer to where their kids are playing, they could better supervise or intervene.

“The tenants were really motivated to have a space where their kids could play,” says Victoria Seib, outreach director at Experience Church. “Several units back onto the space so parents can see the kids from their homes. The moms like that their kids can safely play so close.”

During the consultation process, tenants put in countless hours of volunteer time to design a space that would meet everyone’s needs. The results include a series of planter boxes, picnic tables, benches, decorative rocks painted by resident kids, tractor tires to play on and hopscotch games stencilled on the pavement.

The pièce de résistance is a concrete pad with a permanent basketball hoop, which the Calgary

Clockwise, left to right: Organizers received support from Calgary Foundation and the Calgary Police Youth Foundation; the new space allows for creativity, including painted rocks and sidewalk art projects; volunteers from Experience Church helped prepare the courtyard.



“There are a lot of new Canadians and immigrant families in the complex, and it’s really important to have a space where they can make friends.” —Victoria Seib



Police Youth Foundation helped fund in recognition of the importance of physical play in the lives of youth and to build relationships with the kids in the community.

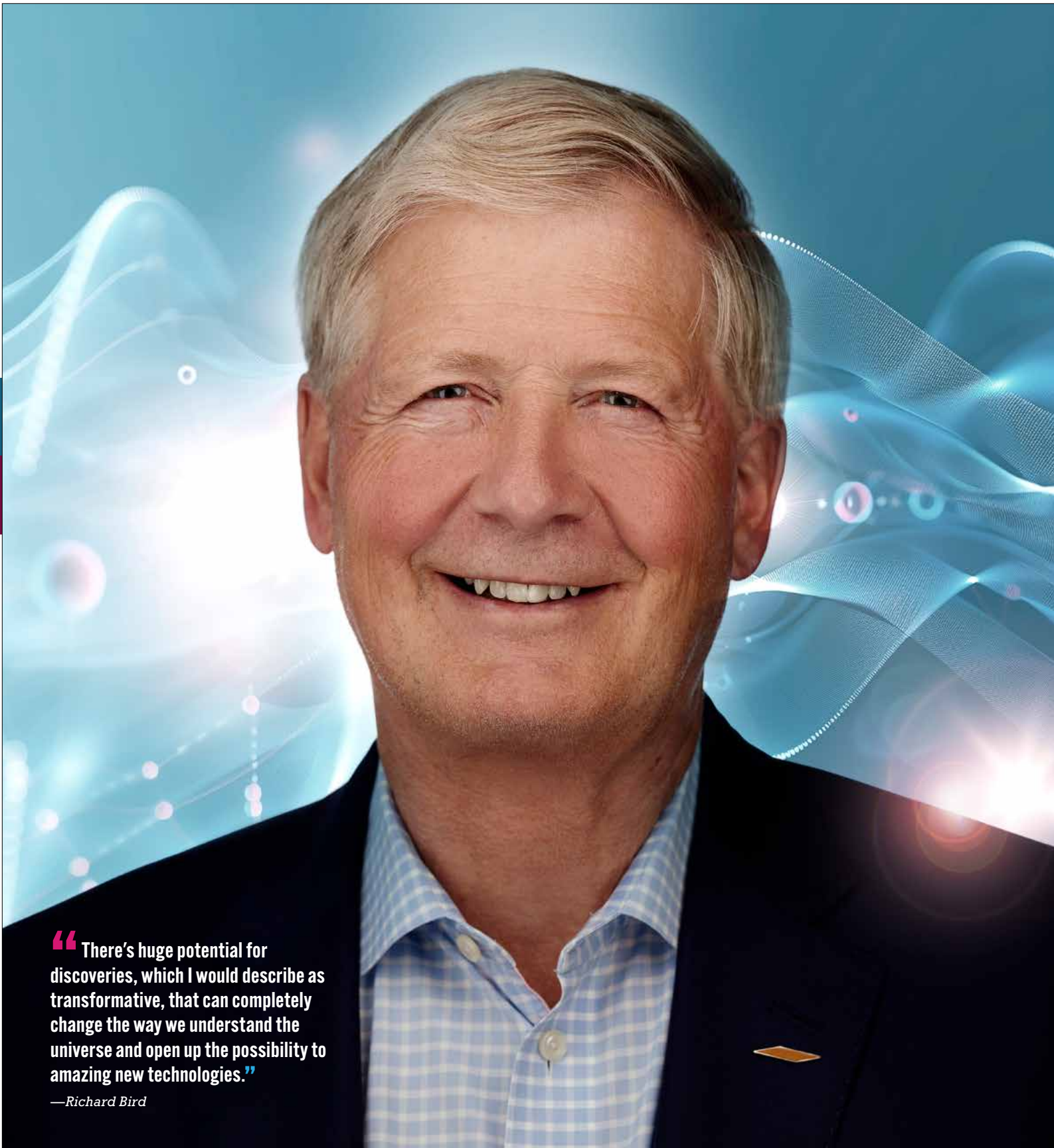
While having a place for outdoor activity is important, most importantly, the courtyard provides a gathering

place for people to meet and interact. The sense of ownership and belonging that comes from collaboratively creating this beautiful space has transformed the entire complex into a real home, rather than just a building to live in.

“There are a lot of new Canadi-

ans and immigrant families in the complex, and it's really important to have a space where they can make friends,” Seib says. “It truly helps to build community and connection.” ■

➤ Learn more about Neighbour Grants at calgaryfoundation.org



“There’s huge potential for discoveries, which I would describe as transformative, that can completely change the way we understand the universe and open up the possibility to amazing new technologies.”

—Richard Bird

Pursuing the Untold Potential of Quantum Science

The Quantum Foundations Research Fund brings transformational research to Alberta

By Olivia Piché

Quantum science has the power to unravel the mysteries of the universe, and harnessing that potential could have huge societal benefits.

Richard Bird believes Alberta could play a critical role in uncovering some of that potential. As the former executive vice president of corporate development and chief financial officer at Enbridge, Bird has had a successful career in business. Now retired, he's shifted his focus to elevating quantum science research in the province.

"Quantum physics has become an important area of research for the future of humanity," affirms Bird. Quantum science research involves observing the minuscule components that make up the universe, like quarks and neutrino particles, and how they behave differently than the macro elements of the world that we already know and observe easily, like liquids, light and energy.

Many discoveries are derived from quantum science, and most drive humanity forward in big ways. We can thank quantum science for medical diagnostic tools like MRIs, navigation systems like GPS and even cell phones, but that is merely scratching the surface.

"At present, there is much more about quantum physics that we don't know than there is that we do know, so future transformational discoveries could be quite profound," he says. "One that is imaginable is faster-than-light information transfer, which would have profound implications for both long-distance communication and computing power."

About six years ago, Bird became enthralled with the work being done at the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo, Ont. He was drawn to the potential of transformational discoveries at a Canadian institution and

wanted to bring something similar to Alberta.

Along with some colleagues, Bird put a plan in motion. In 2021, the \$1-million Quantum Foundations Research Fund was established at the Calgary Foundation with gifts provided by different sources.

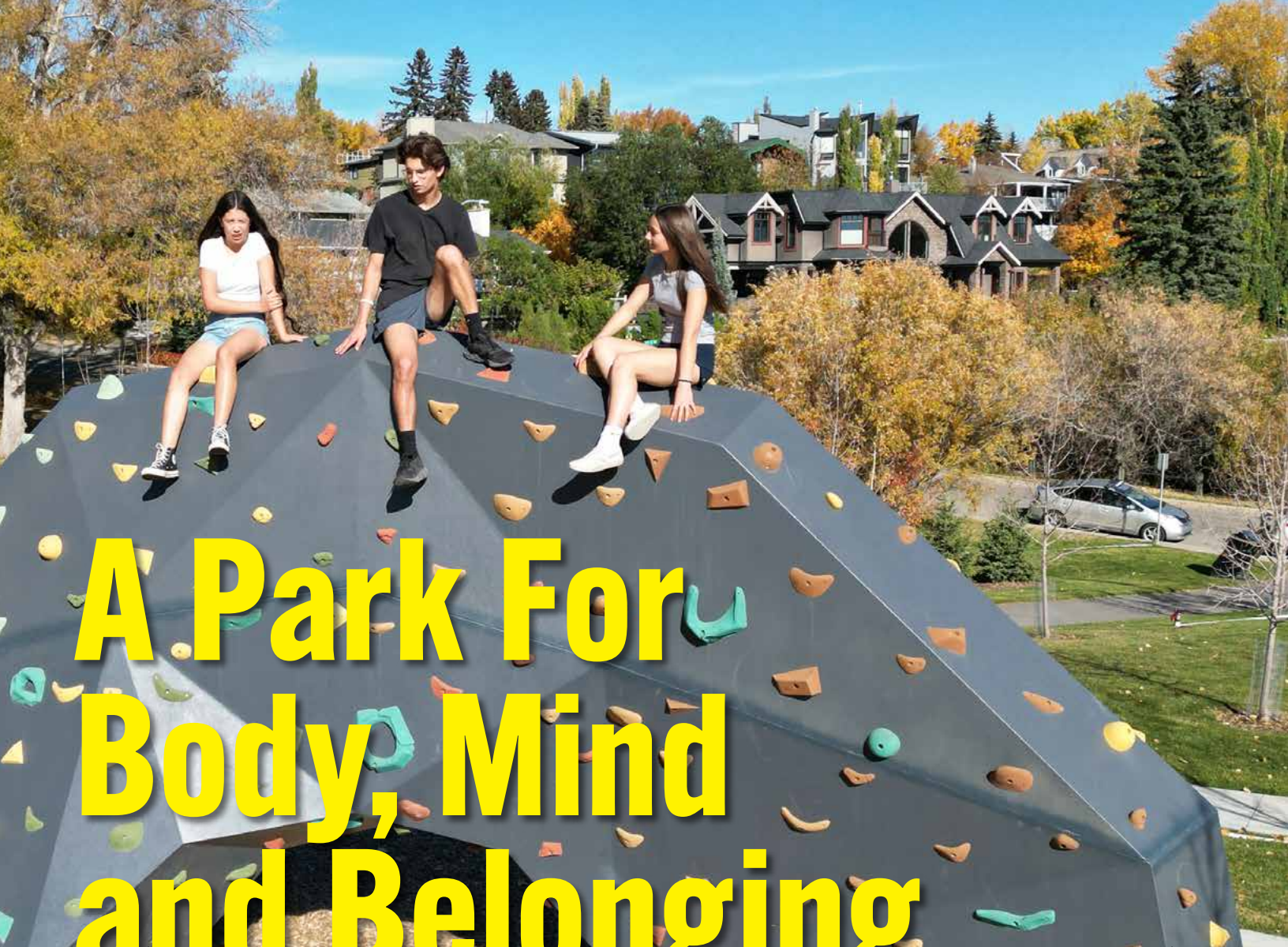
While the Fund was originally set up to support all quantum research in Alberta, it will soon tighten its vision and strictly dedicate its support to Quantum Horizons Alberta, a network established in 2023 between three Alberta universities dedicated to expanding quantum research within the province.

Quantum Horizons Alberta, a \$25-million initiative, aims to bring nine top-rated scientists to the province and facilitate a world-class research network. The Fund is a stepping stone to this ambitious feat — one that could tremendously benefit the province long term.

But, the road to becoming an internationally recognized place of groundbreaking research comes at a price. It can cost up to \$500,000 annually to bring a top-rated quantum scholar to Alberta. However, when compared to the significant possibilities that could come from such complex and pivotal research, the costs seem like a hiccup on the way to a brighter future.

"There's huge potential for discoveries, which I would describe as transformative, that can completely change the way we understand the universe and open up the possibility to amazing new technologies," says Bird. "I think research in quantum science is an area where Alberta could really take a position on the world stage, and I'd like to see that happen." ■

Learn more at quantumhorizonsab.ca



A Park For Body, Mind and Belonging

The giant climbing boulder is a popular spot to hang out.

Alberta's first mental health park is changing the way we design outdoor spaces

By Olivia Piché

Since opening in 2023, the Brawn Family Foundation Rotary Park is where Calgarians have climbed, played, rested and recovered at this first-of-its-kind park. "This park is about creating a sense of belonging for everyone and recognizing the important role that nature plays in health and recovery,"

says Sheila Taylor, chief executive officer of Parks Foundation Calgary.

"People love the park. It's not only beautiful, but there's elements you won't see anywhere else," affirms Taylor, noting it was designed with zones that address different mental health aspects.

There are meditative and restful elements, including hammocks, a

walking labyrinth and infinity loop, areas to get active on the boulder and sports court, spaces for informal gatherings or formal events, and colourful mood-boosting murals.

The park is located next to The Summit: Marian & Jim Sinneave Centre for Youth Resilience, a facility dedicated to youth mental health.

"Young people are at The Summit to get medical help and experiencing some of the roughest times of their lives, but they're running out the door



The park includes active areas, such as sport courts, perfect for basketball and scootering, along with hammocks for relaxing and rock art.

with excitement, and they're running into those hammocks to lie back and look at the sky," says Taylor.

A community effort

In 2019, the Rotary Club of Calgary North approached Parks Foundation, saying that while plans were in place for The Summit, there were no plans for an accompanying outdoor space. "We knew that the youth visiting this new centre were going to need an outdoor space and were going to benefit from it," affirms Taylor.

In partnership with the City of Calgary and the generosity of several donors like the Brawn Family Foundation, Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation, various Rotary Clubs and Calgary Foundation, Parks Foundation created this unique park.

To effectively develop the space, Parks Foundation worked with a landscape architect firm, relied on mental health research, consulted with experts and spoke with teens about what they wanted and needed from outdoor spaces. The positive community response to the Brawn Family Foundation Rotary Park shows it was worth the effort.

Making connections

Youth and visitors of The Summit aren't the only ones benefiting from the park. Community members wander through the pathways or enjoy a coffee on the swing benches. "We have the opportunity to break down barriers of stigma around mental health because everyone's together and everyone's enjoying the space," Taylor affirms.

Youth from The Summit recently painted rocks with inspirational messages and placed them in the park. Those rocks had a ripple effect as park visitors read and reflected upon the messages, while feeling a connection to the youth.

"We loved the sense of community that exercise was creating. We had no idea this kind of situation was going to occur at the park," says Taylor. "It surpassed our expectations."

As community needs shift, more parks and outdoor spaces are starting to use mental health, specifically teen mental health, as the motivating force of its designs. "Innovative projects like this inspire other projects," says Taylor. "We're seeing health and mental health as key design drivers in projects now and that's a big change compared to what I would have seen even five years ago." ■

Learn more at parksfdn.com
Visit the Brawn Family Foundation Rotary Park,
located at 1205 17a St NW in Calgary.

Giving As a Way of Life

For the Lee family, giving back is part of who they are

By Olivia Piché • Photography by Erin Brooke Burns

Vania and Eric Lee are no strangers to giving back to the community. “We believe that the first thing we make belongs to God,” says Vania. “It’s not an afterthought. Giving back is the first thing that we’re going to do.” After careful research, Vania, who works as an accountant in the charitable sector, found the Calgary Foundation to be the ideal avenue for the long-term charitable giving she and her husband were looking to do. “It seemed like a very sustainable model as to how to invest our funds,” she says. “It’s the fact that I’m giving, and it’s going to continue giving after I’m gone.”

A small start can have a lasting impact

In 2020, the Lees set up The Lee Family Charity Fund as an endowment. Once they raised \$10,000, the balance would grow over time, with the total amount granted to the community growing alongside it.

The couple wasn’t concerned about how or when they would reach the \$10,000 mark; they just knew that getting to a place where the Fund could start granting was something they wanted to do — and it felt very achievable. “Some people might get there later if they can contribute less, and some people could probably get there quicker if they contribute more, just depending on their financial situation,” says Eric. “Anyone could do this, not just those with very high income. It’s very easy to start your own Fund and let it grow.”

“We just keep giving what we can every year,” affirms Vania. “It’s amazing to see where giving a little bit every month, over the period of 20 years, is going to get you. It’s a really great investment.”

Doing so has given the Lees the power to forever support causes close to their hearts. In the past year, they hit \$10,000 and have been able to start granting to a charity of their choice. They supported Closer To Home, a non-profit that provides diverse programming for children and families — a cause that’s important to them as Eric is a teacher and Vania works in affordable housing.

“Being a mom, I really wanted to be able to help families because it’s very hard to raise a child. I can’t imagine if you were doing that in a situation where you were not able to provide fully for your family,” says Vania.

Building a legacy of philanthropy

Beyond making a lasting impact in the community, the couple hopes to pass along their philanthropic values to their three-year-old daughter, Ella.

“We’d like to instill this paradigm of giving to her,” says Vania. “It’ll be really interesting to see where the Fund is at when Ella gets to 18, and hopefully she starts giving to the Fund as well, and then it’ll just keep going.”

For the Lees, giving back is not a one-time thing — they’re in it for the long haul, and the Lee Family Charity Fund helps put their beliefs into action. “It goes back to our roots about wanting to help others,” says Eric. “This is one way that we can do that.” ■



“ Anyone could do this, not just those with very high income. It’s very easy to start your own Fund and let it grow.” —*Eric Lee*

Vania and Eric Lee at home with their daughter, Ella.



Opening Doors for a Safe Exit

by Jaelyn Molyneux

Between 2022 and 2023, the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters reported 59,215 calls for help, a 12.5 per cent year-over-year increase. With the guiding message that you are not alone, you will not be judged and we're here to help, the following organizations provide domestic violence supports to meet the ever-increasing needs.

Nisa Homes

For many immigrant, refugee and non-status Muslim women living in violent homes in Calgary, leaving domestic abuse means overcoming barriers that may seem insurmountable. It might involve going where you don't speak the language, where foods and customs are unfamiliar and where you might not have a place to pray or feel comfortable wearing a hijab. Exposure to Islamophobia might happen and potential issues with immigration. There's also cultural expectations to contend with, such as how women should obey their husbands.

Nisa Homes removes those barriers in ways that other shelters simply can't. It's a transitional housing program for domestic abuse survivors and part of Nisa Foundation, a charitable organization that works across Canada to engage, equip and enrich the lives of Muslim women.

The Nisa Homes Calgary shelter opened in 2019 and is the only domestic violence shelter in the city focused on helping Muslim women. The 2021 city census showed that Islam is the third largest religious group in Calgary.

In early 2024, the Calgary shelter moved to a new location to double its capacity and make room for up to 25 women and children. It's more, but not nearly enough. At the beginning of 2023, the waitlist was at 43 people. It jumped to 168 by the end of the year. Add to that, these numbers are likely only a fraction of the women in need, as abuse among immigrant populations is often vastly underreported.

Cultural acceptance and understanding

Nisa Homes is run by Muslim women, and while staff often share some religious and cultural experiences,

Across Canada

10 Nisa Homes

sheltered 1,519 women and children since 2015.

Every 100 hours,

a woman is killed by their intimate partner.

Every night, 3,491

women and their children sleep in shelters because it isn't safe at home.

70 per cent

of spousal violence is not reported to the police.



“It’s very hard to leave an abusive relationship. Having a place that understands some aspects of who you are helps.” —Yasmine Youssef

they never assume they know where a woman is coming from and how they might need help. Every person is approached from a place of cultural humility, responsibility and safety.

“It’s very hard to leave an abusive relationship. Having a place that understands some aspects of who you are helps,” says Yasmine Youssef, executive director of Nisa Foundation. “It gives a sense of safety that at least they won’t be asked to explain

or defend their whole community or religion. It makes a big difference, especially when you’re vulnerable, and you’re just trying to get help.”

Nisa materials are proactively translated into Hindi, Urdu, Somali and other languages common to Muslim communities. Staff may also speak those languages, so difficult conversations can happen without being stilted by the extra step of translation.

They ask what food or clothing

the women might like instead of assuming preferences are universal. They are sensitive to the cultural difference between the importance of individualism in Canada versus the collectivism of other countries that the women might be more familiar with.

Stronger together

Nisa Homes shelters multiple families at once, which means the women aren’t alone. They cook together and eat together. They watch television together. That togetherness is important.

“It feels like a sisterhood being with people who understand and accept you,” says Youssef. “That is part of the healing process. A lot of people we work with have been isolated. Abusers often use isolation as a means of control. And newcomers are often isolated because they don’t know the country, its people or where to go. That physical isolation takes time to overcome.”

The average stay in Nisa Homes is one to three months, but it varies on a case-by-case basis. Not everything can be solved in that time, but it’s an important start on the path to independence. When women leave Nisa Homes, they still get support from an assigned case worker. “When women move in, they are so broken and hopeless,” says Youssef. “They are strong and resilient, but they are at one of the lowest points in their lives. By the time they move out, they have excitement and hope. You can see a very tangible difference between the day they move in and the day they move out.”

➤ Learn more at nisahomes.com



Inside the Day Shelter in Airdrie.

“We see very strong, resilient, incredible women. Our entire goal is to empower her to reach her own goals.”
—Dana Gable



Airdrie P.O.W.E.R.

From the outside, it looks like an average house. Pine trees grow tall in the front. The sound of kids giggling and playing echoes from the backyard. There’s no sign to indicate that this home is, in fact, a lifesaving resource for women experiencing domestic violence in Airdrie.

The house is the Day Shelter, a resource and support centre run by Airdrie P.O.W.E.R. (Protecting Our Women with Emergency Resources).

Women accessing this space often feel scared, ashamed or confused. They might feel like they have lost control of their life. They could be physically or emotionally bruised. Some suspect they are in an abusive relationship but don’t know for sure. They do know that they need to talk to someone.

The Day Shelter is an approachable first connection. When visitors arrive, they’re welcomed in. Their kids safely settle in another room to play before they sink into a comfy couch across from someone ready to help.

Supportive listening

“We listen,” says Dana Gable, operations manager for Airdrie P.O.W.E.R. “That’s our main role. We hear their stories and validate their experience. From there, it’s really individual.”

The Day Shelter helps women navigate what can be an overwhelming amount of decisions and emotions. It helps with financial and legal considerations, connects women with counsellors and guides them through

the network of support agencies. Essentials like food and clothing are taken care of. The shelter doesn’t offer a place to stay overnight, but if there is immediate danger, arrangements are made to keep everyone safe.

“It’s a really hard task to rebuild your life and get out,” says Gable. “We see very strong, resilient, incredible women. Our entire goal is to empower her to reach her own goals. We want to help her discover her own voice again, what she wants and how she wants to move forward. Then, we do our best to make sure we can walk with her through that.”

The Day Shelter opened in February 2021 after it became apparent to Airdrie P.O.W.E.R. that an overnight shelter would take too long to build financially, particularly in Airdrie’s competitive real estate market. Another key factor is that an alternate form of support was needed as some women can’t or won’t approach an overnight shelter for help. Airdrie’s population has quadrupled in the past 20 years, and social support infrastructure hasn’t kept up. Dedicated support for domestic violence was needed immediately, so the organization opted for a day shelter.

Airdrie P.O.W.E.R. continues to work towards bringing additional support to women in Airdrie, whether it’s through a residential shelter, transitional housing or other services. In the meantime, its Day Shelter continues to provide a safe supportive space for survivors — 300 and counting. ■

 Learn more at airdriepower.com

The Power of Inclusion

by Ashley King

In 2022, one out of every five individuals in Alberta over the age of 15 was identified as living with a disability. With support from the Calgary Foundation, these two organizations raise disability awareness and meet the needs of individuals living with disabilities through their unique services and programs.



Cerebral Palsy Association in Alberta: Music Therapy for Adults with Disabilities

For almost 50 years, the Cerebral Palsy Association in Alberta (CPAA) has been supporting children and adults with disabilities across the province. CPAA actively serves over 4,300 community members and continues to push its "Life Without Limits" philosophy through online and in-person programs and services.

To establish structure and activities for individuals living with a disability, families turn to organizations like CPAA for assistance. CPAA not only fosters a sense of community but also contributes to building a meaningful routine and improved sense of well-being.

CPAA's most popular offering is

the Music Therapy Program, a vital resource for adults over the past 15 years. Accessible and inclusive, the program creates a welcoming community space for clients to participate in therapeutic musical activities in a group setting.

"It's always sold out, every single session we put on, and I think that's because music is the universal language," says the CPAA's executive director, Joanne Dorn, who adds that it's a pretty spectacular class to watch.

"It doesn't matter if you're verbal or nonverbal; it's a class where everyone can come together, and they all understand."

The 12-week workshop is led by trained music therapists and includes activities like singing, rhythmical exercises, listening to different styles



Music therapist Lisa encourages class participant Jemila.



“It doesn’t matter if you’re verbal or nonverbal; it’s a class where everyone can come together, and they all understand.”

—Joanne Dorn



Class participant Shanzay plays the drum with music therapist Lauren (left) and caregiver Imelda.

of music and instrument use. Instructors get to individually connect with participants and, because clients are keen to sign up for every new session, familiarity also grows among clients, building a strong sense of community.

The Music Therapy Program empowers adult clients to express themselves and enhances their self-confidence. This form of therapy can also effectively decrease symptoms of depression, uplift overall mood and reduce the perception of pain.

Registration is \$170.00 for the program, but CPAA works with clients if cost is a barrier to participating. “We’ve seen that the need is there,”

says Dorn, explaining there are fewer options and funding for programming that serves adults living with disabilities, compared to children and youth.

As a parent to someone living with cerebral palsy, Dorn personally understands the benefits of meaningful participation and recognizes the positive impact it has on individuals. “Inclusion is very important in every aspect of life,” she says. “We’re getting there, slowly but surely, but there’s still a few challenges left to overcome to be a fully inclusive society.”

➤ [Learn more at cpalberta.com](https://www.cpalberta.com)

Wheelchair Sports Alberta: School Program

Wheelchair Sports Alberta (WSA) delivers and develops provincial-level parasport programs and services. To address the prevalent stigma surrounding individuals with physical disabilities, WSA offers an innovative on-location school program, which creates spaces for young people that promote both physical activity and conversations about accessibility and disability.

In school gymnasiums across Calgary (and in Northern Alberta), WSA introduces wheelchair sports to students from grades five to 12. The program can be tailored to meet the needs of each school and includes wheelchair rentals and instruction to students of all abilities in parasports like wheelchair basketball, rugby and tennis.

In addition to fun on the court, WSA uses the opportunity to engage students in conversations about disability, accessibility and inclusion, says executive director, Jen Sales. Having tough discussions about ableism early on with students is important, particularly in a safe environment where students can feel comfortable asking questions.

After successfully launching in 2019, COVID-19 brought everything to a halt, and WSA couldn’t return to schools until 2022. Although it was slow to restart, the growth has been exponential, with nothing but an overwhelmingly positive response. “The program has been really well received,” affirms Sales, with schools requesting WSA’s return within months of their first experience.

With funding, WSA bought a vehicle that can tow a trailer filled with wheelchairs, including its recently purchased sport wheelchairs, which,



“I hope the kids use the experience to create a better future for everybody.”

—Jen Sales

Top: Young students get the chance to learn to play wheelchair basketball in sport wheelchairs. Bottom: A class of students watches as a teacher demonstrates an aspect of wheelchair basketball.



even on the low end, cost about \$1,700 per chair. WSA has also acquired more size-inclusive wheelchair options to add to its fleet.

In addition to the school program, WSA offers various services to further wheelchair sports participation, including the Club Request Program, which facilitates tournaments or clinics, support in the training of coaches and officials, equipment rental, affordable insurance and financial assistance to Albertans participating in parasports.

With the continued growth of the WSA school program, Sales is hopeful

that students will carry the experience forward in their roles as future community leaders.

“These kids eventually are going to be engineers, policymakers and things like that,” she says. “I hope they have this experience in the back of their minds when they’re making decisions that affect people experiencing disability, and use it to create a better future for everybody.” ■

➤ Learn more at wheelchairsportsalberta.com

The Golden Years:

Supporting Healthy Aging

Driven by the goal of healthy aging, with support from the Calgary Foundation, the following organizations provide programs and develop strategies to embrace, empower and ensure older adults can enjoy a good quality of life

By Michaela Ream

1

MPC Foundation: Support Without Borders

As the founders of MPC Foundation, Mae Chun and Lily Kwok want to reduce barriers to inclusion for immigrant seniors by providing social hubs for them to interact, learn and feel a sense of belonging. MPC stands for MPowerCanada, a play on the word empower — “it’s our homage to Canada for giving us, immigrants, possibilities for a good life in Canada,” says Chun.

The inspiration to motivate seniors to live their best lives began when Chun worked at LINKages Society of Alberta, a now-closed organization that connected youth with seniors to share their wisdom and act as mentors. Exploring aging models across several countries, including Japan, the Netherlands and China, helped Chun to see what is possible and understand the holistic benefits of seniors aging in place, at their own pace, rather than moving into a care home.

“We don’t want to treat seniors as if they are a vulnerable population that needs to be served; we want to look at how we can empower them with skills, knowledge and resources

so that they can live independently within the community,” says Chun.

Having moved from Malaysia to Canada over 30 years ago, Chun focused on supporting other immigrant seniors, knowing firsthand the difficulties of being away from family and facing language barriers.

MPC Foundation began by supporting 30 to 40 older adults aged 55 and older who attended English classes led by volunteers fluent in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Punjabi and Hindi. The classes have since evolved to cover topics including women’s health, digital literacy, banking and finance, budgeting and taxes, and independent living skills, such as hiring



for snow removal, lawn maintenance and housing repairs.

"The pandemic changed everything. It presented opportunities and challenges," says Chun. Many seniors didn't have the technological skills to socialize or stay in touch with family, but MPC Foundation didn't have devices to provide hands-on teaching.

MPC Foundation received funding to purchase tablets and engaged "an army of volunteers" who taught a Tech Buddy Program online. The program focused on teaching seniors to use tablets, cell phones and laptops effectively for practical reasons like accessing medical records and using Zoom to stay connected — particu-

larly important for those with family abroad. What started with 30 seniors soared to over 300 who are making use of MPC Foundation's programming today.

Developing partnerships to share resources and host year-round events, MPC Foundation works closely with many organizations, including Vivo, the Northern Hills and Kincora community associations, Symons Valley United Church and the North Calgary Cultural Association. "Our work is focused on seniors who live in the community, and the people who

MPC Foundation organizes a variety of outings and activities for seniors from many cultures. It also provides services like intergenerational computer learning, giving people young and old the chance to connect.

know them best and can reach them most effectively are the organizations already serving them," Chun says.

In addition to a comprehensive self-care program and a connection club for social get-togethers, learning opportunities, arts and crafts, and exercise classes, there are opportunities for seniors to give back. For example, the Helping Hands/Heart to Heart Care program is run by older adults who provide care packages, visitation and companionship to other older adults in need.

Ultimately, MPC Foundation helps seniors feel relevant and valued as well as gain a renewed sense of purpose and belonging to one another and their community, leading to a life well lived.

➤ Learn more at mpcfdn.ca





2

Cochrane: Building an Age-Friendly Community

Cochrane is a historic and charming town, and one of Alberta's fastest-growing municipalities. Its

current population of around 35,000 is expected to grow to 86,500 by 2047. Its senior population (65 and older) is also growing quickly. According to the Cochrane Family and Community Support Services Annual Report 2022, the senior population has grown by 172.4 per cent since 2018, more than any other age demographic.

To address the needs of this group,

▲ 172.4 %

According to the Cochrane Family and Community Support Services Annual Report 2022, the senior population has grown by 172.4 per cent since 2018, more than any other age demographic.

the Town of Cochrane undertook a study into collective action to ensure older adults have independence, a chance to participate in society, feel secure in their daily needs, and have fair access to equal treatment and resources.

As the study expanded into a three-year, in-depth look at the community, a new goal emerged to turn Cochrane into an age-friendly community with no barriers to accessing services, programs, businesses and facilities for older adults. As a result, the Cochrane Age-Friendly Strategy is being developed.

While geared towards older adults, the strategy will have a trickle-down effect by creating a design that benefits citizens of all ages. "We intend to build a community that is so effortlessly accessible that it will have a positive impact on everyone," says Kim Krawec, manager of Cochrane's family and community support services. Wheelchair-accessible spaces, for example, will also be useful for parents with strollers or young children.

Inspired by the World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities Framework, the strategy focuses on three main categories: social, health and built environments.

The social environment looks at the availability of activities or events, understanding that participation helps reduce isolation in seniors. The health environment examines the availability of health services and information. The built environment investigates

the accessibility and affordability of transportation, housing, parks and recreation.

"This model combines all aspects of community to talk about our strengths, identify any barriers and discover how we can collectively create a community that allows one to not just age but stay active, connected and live a successful life in the community," says Sharon Moore, a consultant on the strategy.

Community-wide partnerships have been developed with government, health and seniors organizations, each providing different expertise and healthy-aging suggestions. The Cochrane Municipality has also come on board, adding a unique level of support that will be built into future municipal planning as Cochrane grows.

As the strategy evolves, Moore will reach out to Indigenous communities to ensure Indigenous experiences, voices, and approaches to community and aging are included. "We could learn a lot from the Indigenous community about the role and respect of older adults," says Moore.

Scheduled to be completed in October 2024, the age-friendly action plan will identify the required infrastructure and delivery models to enhance the accessibility and breadth of services for older adults.

To date, the Government of Alberta has only officially designated seven communities, including Calgary, as age-friendly cities, and Krawec is eager to see Cochrane join those ranks soon. "I'm incredibly proud of the work that's happened and look forward to sharing what we've gained from others and acting as a model for other communities," she says.

 Learn more at cochrane.ca/community-culture/community-programs-services



A Kerby Centre volunteer assists in the delivery of food hampers, part of the Thrive Food Security program to help combat food insecurity for older adults.

3

Unison at Kerby Centre: Stronger for Longer

The proverb "it takes a village to raise a child" refers to an entire community helping children as they grow up, but childhood isn't the only stage in life where assistance is needed. As we grow older, community support remains critical. For over 50 years, the Unison at Kerby Centre has served

as a place where aging is not only supported but honoured.

Its founder, Patricia Allen, was inspired to open the centre in 1973 while attending a retirement-planning workshop where she noticed that many older adults were not included in the decision-making or policy decisions that directly affected them. Motivated to improve the quality of life for older adults, Allen adheres to the phrase, "Nothing about us, without us," which continues to define Kerby Centre's purpose.

Kerby Centre initially focused on reducing isolation amongst older adults by offering recreational activ-





ities but rapidly expanded to include grocery delivery, an income-tax filing service, exercise classes, a day program and a wellness clinic. In collaboration with Medicine Hat, Unison at Veiner Centre was opened offering multipurpose social services, and cultural drop-in and information facilities to older adults in that city.

“There’s a real focus on helping seniors live better and live longer, and the last few years have taught us that there are many ways that we can help,” says Larry Mathieson, president and CEO of Unison for Generations 50+. “With new needs arising,

the pandemic pushed us to pivot and be innovative.” Unison began offering more mental health support both in-person and online, and increased its food security programs.

When the Kerby Centre’s café had to close during the pandemic, staff began cooking fresh meals, which were delivered to older adults who were afraid to go out.

As awareness surrounding food insecurity grew, the Kerby Centre partnered with five other senior centres that hosted free pop-up food markets to make it easier for older adults to access meals. Partnerships

Kerby Centre’s Active Aging programming includes tai chi, pickleball and drawing. Seniors can choose from a variety of different classes and drop-in activities.

have since grown to 11, and Mathieson says the Kerby Centre continues to give away approximately \$23,000 worth of food each month. Similarly, the Veiner Centre expanded its programming to provide bread and groceries twice a week.

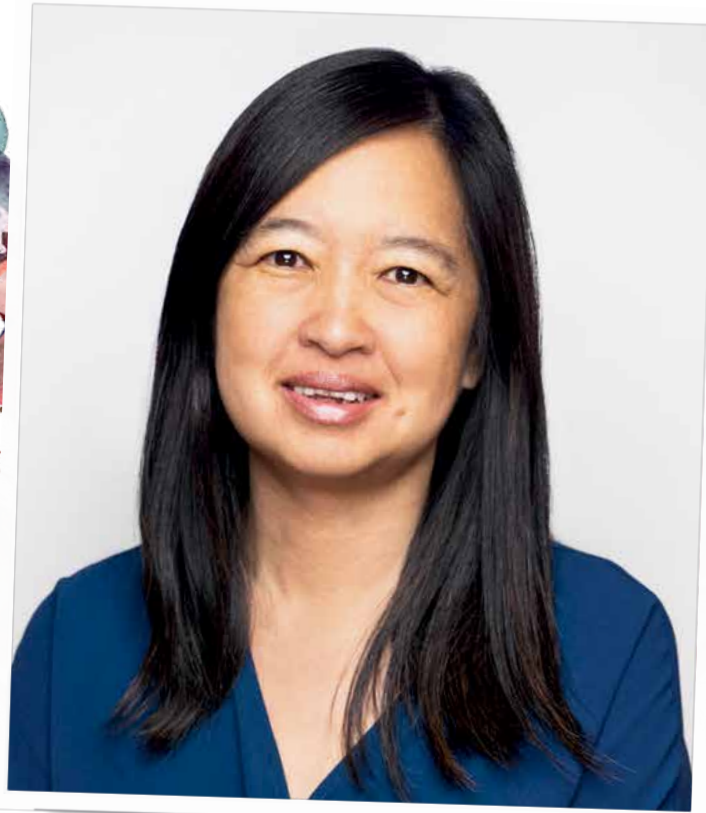
The shift to incorporating more online services, including Zoom classes, yoga and support groups, has allowed Unison to better support older adults, especially participants who no longer drive and rely on online communication.

“There’s much more focus on outreach and working with seniors directly in the communities they live in and not just where our building is,” says Mathieson. “We’ve served more seniors today than we’ve ever served in our history, but we know we can reach a lot more by continuing to look at what they want and need.” ■

Learn more at unisonalberta.com/calgary-home

REMEMBERING OUR BELOVED COLLEAGUE

Grace Chiu



Grace was a valued member of the Calgary Foundation staff team for the past 14 years.

Her presence brought warmth, kindness and an abundance of joy to our workplace every day. She was not only a pillar of knowledge and expertise, Grace was also a beloved friend to each one of us.

As "Grand Central," Grace was the hub, the go-to person for guidance, advice and a listening ear. Her wealth of institutional knowledge was matched only by her welcoming and compassionate demeanor. She was a teacher, and brought a calm and steady perspective to every problem.

Her passing in April 2024 leaves a giant hole on our team and in our hearts.

As we cope to come to terms with this profound loss, we will remember Grace for the incredible person she was – a dedicated colleague, a compassionate friend and a shining example of love and kindness.

Though she may no longer be with us in person, her spirit will forever live on at the Foundation, and in our hearts and memories.

To honour her legacy, the Grace Chiu Memorial Fund has been established by her family at the Calgary Foundation.



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