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Condo of the Year Quarter Finalist:

CELEBRITY PLACE

Predicting a Bright Future for a Fabulous Community!



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CELEBRITY PLACE
77 MAITLAND PLACE, TORONTO

on being awarded CCI's
Condo of the Year!

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Condo of the Year

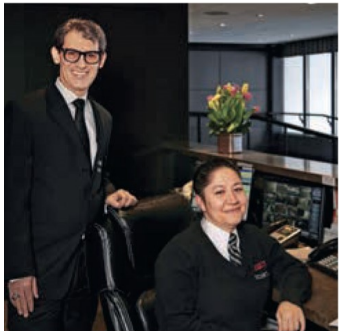
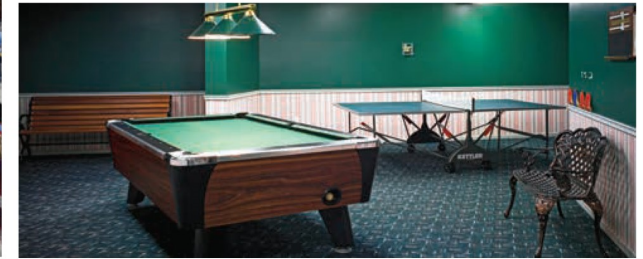
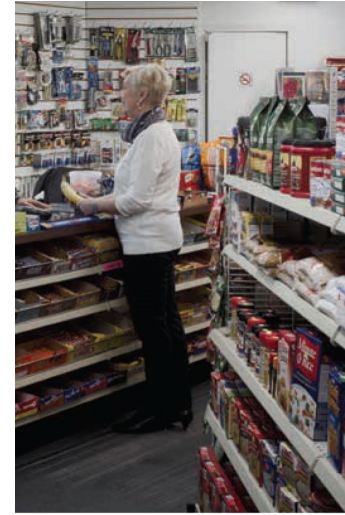
By James M. Russell



Ms.
Monroe
has (not)
left the
building

Some residents live in Clark Gables. Some in Mary Pickfords. Others in Audrey Hepburns. Regardless, all the residents - famous or not - love Celebrity Place, a welcoming, twin-towered 'neighbourhood within a neighbourhood' amid the sterile canyons of downtown Toronto.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RON JUCSAK



"I've been around a long time. Maybe the people like me."

Humphrey Bogart



At top:
The newly renovated lobby at
Celebrity Place

Middle from left to right:
Janice Sweeney, Property Manager
Kaz Abji, Building Administrator

Below left to right:
Parriz Sohrabi, Supervisor
Ulke Doulah, Concierge

Now thirty years old, Celebrity Place sits on the northeastern tip of the Church-Wellesley Village, or simply 'The Village' to most. Back in the early 1800s, this swath of real estate belonged to Alexander Wood, merchant and Magistrate of Upper Canada, a job that required him to enforce the Sabbath, to provide relief to the poor and administer criminal justice. Tragically, his years of government service were plagued by sexual scandals.

Six movie legends from the Golden Era of Hollywood has her or his own floor plan named after them so every resident of Celebrity Place's 382 suites can say they live in a Monroe or a Gable. One of the building's biggest celebrities, however, is not a movie star but a resident who has lived in Celebrity Place for nearly a decade and a half. Sylvia Thomas is a spry woman with boundless energy and a pixie glint in her eye. "I was living in a big house in Willowdale but as I got older I realised that the moment had come to downsized," Sylvia says as she recounts the time she began condominium hunting. "I was very impressed with all that is here. The residents are so involved, so welcoming." Since moving to the building, Sylvia has been one of Celebrity Places'

"The only reason they come to see me is that I know that life is great, and they know I know it."

Clark Gable



At left:
An arts and crafts group enjoys the library

Middle from left to right:
Vikki Todd and Young-Han Phu in the Celebrity Place Tuck Shop

At right:
Celebrity Place boasts a fully equipped woodworking shop and a games room complete with pool table, ping pong and shuffle board





most active and energetic volunteers – serving as Library Coordinator, Fundraiser in the Silent Auction, Yoga Instructor, as well as a Book Club and Christmas Decorations Committee member. Oh, and did I mention that she is Celebrity Place's official, and exquisitely costumed, fortune teller at their charity events?

A great life is what draws people to Celebrity Place.

Besides the standard amenities offered by condo buildings, Celebrity Place has quite a few unique perks, such as:

- A well-stocked and busy Tuck Shop that sells dry, canned, and frozen foods, toiletries, cleaning and paper products, some dairy items and rents DVDs.
- A combination TV and movie room with terraced theatre seating and wrap around sound. In addition to being used for Celebrity Place's twice-weekly Movie Nights, the facility can also be booked by residents who want to host their own film night or Big Game party.
- A well-attended and unique Book Club, led by residents Jean and Doug Patton, that not only reads a book a month but the club members embark on field trips

related to that month's reading assignment. Just recently, they met in a Polish restaurant in the west end after reading Andrew Borkowski's Copernicus Avenue, a collection of short stories about Polish immigrants living in Roncesvalles Village.

- And a gym so well designed and equipped that it puts to shame many private fitness clubs.

The outside firm Results Fitness Lifestyle runs the gym and offers classes that include: challenging boot camps, zumba, yoga, aerobics and tai chi.

Other fitness amenities include two squash courts, a racquetball/basketball court, shuttle board, ping pong, swimming pool, a darts room, and, for keeping the residents' vehicles fit – two carwash bays.

Celebrity Place is widely known for the level of kindness and care that the residents show one another. Neighbours help neighbours with their shopping and doctor visits; they check on ailing residents and exchange hellos and good mornings on the elevator. Board Treasurer André Quenneville once lent his TV when his neighbour's set broke down.

"We have an amazing sense of community and a willingness to look out for and assist fellow residents," says Vicky Todd, the Board's President.

But the 'helping hand' that Ms. Hepburn mentioned extends beyond the property line of Celebrity Place. In years past the residents have raised funds for various charities, including 'Doctors Without Borders'. Just last year the residents of Celebrity Place and many of the building's contractors raised \$9262 for The Redwood, an organization that supports women and children by providing a safe, abuse-free environment.

Groucho surely would have changed his mind if he had the pleasure of living at Celebrity Place where enthusiastic and hard-working residents run the Gardening, Christmas Decorations, Library, Hobby Room, and Online committees.

Together, they plan and manage Celebrity Places:

- Annual Summer BBQ
- Christmas Party and Silent Auction
- Semi-Annual Yard Sales
- Library and Hobby Room
- Facebook page, Blog, and Website

- Semi-Annual Craft Sales
- ... and the occasional special events such as organising this year's 30th Anniversary

In addition to managing Celebrity Place's social media presence, the Online Committee recently launched a digital photography gallery and invited residents to submit their work.

The fact is, like many buildings in downtown Toronto, Celebrity Place is approaching its Boomer years and looming like a tummy tuck or a hip replacement is a \$1.5 million project that has been nipping at the Board's heels for some time.

"The garage roof membrane has been listed in the Reserve Fund Study as being within the time frame for replacement. We do not have any signs of leakage; however, we do need to have this done before we have any issues, so we are in the planning stages." Says Janice Sweeney, Celebrity Place's Condominium Manager.

"The job will require the removal of our beautiful grounds, including many mature

trees", adds Vicky with sadness.

Celebrity Place's Board is made up of Vicky Todd, President; Karin Brown – Secretary; Clarissa Connell – Communications Director; and André Quenneville, Treasurer.

"Our building will be 30 years old in 2015. It is expected that reserve-funded work will be required for mechanical systems and repairs to exterior walls, among other projects," says Vicky. In order to plan for that work, Celebrity Place is currently undertaking a comprehensive Reserve Fund Study that includes an on-site inspection.

The Board's recent projects – all successfully planned and executed, include:

- Updating the lobby and hallways
- New hardwood floor for the Party Room
- Renovated the party room
- Front desk software upgrade
- Replacing the gym equipment
- Repairs to the driveway
- Upgrading the electrical system
- Installation of elevator compensation chains as mandated by the TSSA
- Enhancements to B2 and B3 corridors

"As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands, one for helping yourself, the other for helping others."

Audrey Hepburn



Below:
Sylvia Thomas, fortune teller, head of the Library Committee and one time volunteer of the year





“You can’t help getting older, but you don’t have to get old.”

George Burns



Above left to right:
Carolito, Wolfgang Hock, Hans Tunmatis

At left:
The gorgeous gardens,
Photographed by Clarissa Connell

Still, this year’s \$2.6 million budget represents an increase over the 2014 budget of only 1.96%.

Recognizing the importance of free and frequent communication with residents, the Board utilizes a wide assortment of channels, including a quarterly newsletter, a blog, a Facebook page, postings to Celebrity Place’s digital elevator notice board or website and old fashion, but effective, door-to-door communication.

One of the great successes at Celebrity Place is the degree of respect that the Board and management have for each other.

“This is the best board I have ever worked with,” says Janice, “They are very good. Very diligent.”

Celebrity Place is managed by Maple Ridge Community Management and has three full-time office staff, Janice, Kaz Abji - Site Administrator, and a resident superintendent.



dent. The remainder of the work - cleaning and security - is contracted out.

Of course, Mother Earth is no ‘lost cause’, not as long as forward-thinking condominium boards such as Celebrity Place’s continue to recognize the importance of reducing our reliance on non-renewable energy resources. “This was a no-brainer,” says Vicky of Celebrity Place’s recent lighting retrofit. “We were taking advantage of new technologies that save us a lot of money and reduce our carbon footprint. With such a quick pay-back and a rebate of almost 30% of the cost, it was an easy decision to go ahead.”

The retrofit is expected to reduce their energy use by over 57%, which will allow Celebrity Place to recoup the \$49,500 initial expense in just over a year. The work had aesthetic and security benefits as well. “LED and cold cathode technology fixtures maintain their level of illumination in cold weather, eliminating the dimness that occurs during winter months with our current fixtures” adds Vicky. Celebrity Place replaced 870 four-foot T8 fixtures, 220 two-lamp T8 strips and as many as 123 electronic ballasts.

“I would never join any club that would have me as a member.”

Groucho Marx



Above left to right:
Juan Sousa, Cleaner
Leynce Rodriguez, Super Assistant
Frank Socarras, Cleaner
Alex Vasylenko, Superintendent

In addition to their ongoing plastic and paper recycling efforts, Celebrity Place introduced a Green Bin program last year.

Energy conservation projects planned for the near future include: boiler and roof repairs, and replacement of their cooling tower.

“There are many things that give me reason to live in the building,” says Vicky, a resident for seventeen years “...but one of the things that I am so proud of is our Christmas decorations. The Board and some volunteers get together in early December and spend one day decorating our lobby, gardens, dining room and party room. On a dark, dreary December day there is nothing nicer than arriving home and being greeted by our garden lights and sparkling lobby!”

With such a savvy and dynamic Board, and caring group of residents, Celebrity Place’s star will no-doubt continue to sparkle.

A prediction that even Sylvia’s crystal ball would likely echo. **CV**