

East York Non-Profit Housing Corporation wins Award for Excellence

Gower Park Place, a 164 unit non-profit housing corporation in East York, has won the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association's Award for Excellence this year.

The annual Award recognizes "an innovative non-profit housing corporation that has responded to tenant and community needs with imagination and insight."

Gower Park Place is just that. Gower Park Place opened in 1994 after years of adamant opposition from neighbourhood residents. The perseverance of Gower Park Place's sponsors and owners, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Toronto Central Council and VincentPaul Family Homes Corporation, turned that hostility to unqualified support. Gower Park Place is now a lively home for 350 residents from over 20 different nations, and a resource for the entire neighbourhood.

From the outset, Gower Park Place was designed with community in mind. Its open courtyard, playground, community centre and wide halls encourage socializing and discourage vandalism and crime. In 1995, Gower Park Place won the Mayor's Blooming Contest for Best Apartment Building Garden in East York.

Then residents and volunteers – including the Board of Directors and the St. Maximilian Kolbe Conference, Society of St. Vincent de Paul (founded in 1994 to support the community) – brought the community to life. Community events include a weekly "coffee and chat program, computer training, workshops on container gardening, budgeting and investing, and a Job Hunt Club.

This community, and the security that comes from stable housing, has launched many residents into the working world. Many families have found jobs and moved off social assistance, some moving on to own their own homes.

Beyond all this, Gower Park Place has co-sponsored many community initiatives, and made space available to the neighbourhood at no charge. This year, Gower Park Place is home to Toronto Parks and Recreation Department's children and youth programs, Foundation for Advancement in Community Education for Breakfast Buddies school breakfast program, Toronto Separate School Board ESL classes, East York/East Toronto Family Resources parent and tot drop-in, Outreach Ministry after school program, and MTHA Recreation summer camp program.

Gower Park Place is owned by VincentPaul Family Homes Corporation and sponsored by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Toronto Central Council.

For more information about Gower Park Place or to inquire about recruitment opportunities for our Board of Directors, please contact Marisa Dodaro, VincentPaul Family Homes Corporation at (416) 288-8140 or vincentpaul@on.aibn.com.

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