



villa charities

A Year-End Message From President and CEO Anthony DiCaita

As 2019 draws to a close, it's a good time to reflect on the events of the past year and look forward to an exciting new year ahead.

Investments in our Future

Villa Charities continued with its multi-year project initiated in 2018 to repair and replace aging facilities and infrastructure and made several significant capital investments during the year.

Last year, an external consultant was engaged to assess the condition of all VCI properties and identify deficiencies and replacements required over the next decade. Their report indicated that over the next 10 years \$20 million will be needed to address much-needed building repairs and maintenance. In the 2019 period, VCI and its affiliates will have spent approximately \$3.5 million in improvements to the buildings. The first wave of repairs addressed our parking facilities, replacement of multiple heating, ventilation and air conditioning units, information technology upgrades, roof repairs and our hydro facilities.

We also installed a new exterior digital sign on Lawrence Ave., to promote all the activities on the Villa Charities campus.

Villa Charities Community Engagement Projects

Villa Charities recognizes the value of community and stakeholder engagement as an essential part of project planning and decision-making. In 2019, we continued our ongoing engagement with our valued patrons, visitors, residents, tenants and staff through our Community Open Forums and Friday Chats with the CEO. These meetings provided opportunities for our stakeholders to meet and discuss issues, share experiences, and expand their understanding of how Villa Charities and the affiliate organizations function.

Renovations and Third-Party Tenants

At the Columbus Centre, we were excited to launch our efforts to revitalize the venue as we began significant renovations to optimize the use and enhance the quality of our facilities. The improvements reflect Villa Charities' commitment to ensuring a sustainable and vibrant future, and to enriching the experiences for all involved.

The renovations included brand new studios for our dance, music and art programs, and enhancements to our Athletic Club.

In parallel with these changes, we were thrilled to welcome three organizations as new Villa Charities tenants. All of them have a history with the Italian-Canadian community and offer programs and services that complement our offerings and add value to our campus. This past fall, TLN Media Group's corporate and multicultural media production headquarters, and the studios and faculty of the Academy of Realist Art, a private institution that teaches drawing and painting in the old master tradition, relocated to our campus. Next year, we will welcome Leonardo Da Vinci Academy, a prestigious independent Montessori-centered school.

Cultural Activities & Events

During the past year, we continued to invest in culture through the development of high-quality events, programs and exhibitions, which included:

Cultural Tuesdays and Diaspora Series - Our popular series of free, illustrated talks continued, with curated themes focusing on Italian cinema and film stars, cuisine, literature, fashion, nutrition and more. The Diaspora Series also returned, with new presentations and installations exploring Italian culture, society and influence in American history.

Italian Cuisine - Ristorante Boccaccio's popular regional theme nights continued to draw large groups as we indulged in the wonderful offerings of Lazio/Roma, Sicilia and Piemonte.

Joseph D. Carrier Art Gallery - We presented the Canadian premiere of Marco Sassone's landmark exhibition "Home on the Streets," which depicted the personal tragedy of homelessness and its seemingly permanent place in our urban landscape.

Italian Heritage Month - This year's Italian Heritage Month events celebrated Leonardo da Vinci on the 500th anniversary of his death. Events showcased the artistry and talents of Italian-Canadian performers through a series of enriching programs, concerts, dance performances, family-friendly activities and the annual "Viva Vitalità Italiana" art exhibition.

Villa Al Fresco – Our new summer programming series featured many family-friendly events including Movies Under the Stars, family trivia nights, social dancing and more.

Learn Italian by Doing - This new series replaced classroom learning with activities such as yoga, dining and music. The program invited participants to learn or practice their Italian language skills in a relaxed and fun environment.

Art Programs – We introduced new outdoor “En Plein Air” painting workshops, where students could spend the day painting special Italian-themed still life works, focusing on watercolour painting, pen drawing and sketching.

Theatre Arts – Villa Charities premiered two new original theatrical productions, created by our Artists in Residence, the internationally acclaimed DopoLavoro Teatrale (DLT) company. “Leonardo’s Last Supper,” a theatrical and dining experience inspired by the masterpiece of Leonardo da Vinci, had a sold-out run with performances added to meet demand. Our holiday presentation, “The Nonna Monologues,” celebrated our universal love for Nonnas in a comical show that was a big hit with audiences.

Foundation Events

Villa Charities opened its doors and welcomed the entire community to enjoy a fun-filled day of free winter activities and special events at the *Porte Aperte - Inverno / Winter Open House* event on our campus. In addition, our 13th Annual *Giro* cycling event and the 43rd Annual Villa Charities Golf Classic were important events that helped to support Villa Charities and the Foundation in their mission to promote Italian culture, provide culturally sensitive senior care and deliver high-quality community programs and services.

Villa Charities Foundation also hosted a memorable charitable event with special guest Formula One driver Antonio Giovinazzi at the Columbus Centre. Attendees of the exclusive luncheon had the unique opportunity to meet Antonio Giovinazzi and participate in a Q & A. The inaugural *Cena in Famiglia / Family Dinner* charitable event raised funds through hosting guests at a family-style, delicious three-course meal with Italian music in a beautiful outdoor setting at Sala Caboto Gardens. At the launch event for *Un Abbraccio!*, guests were treated to a preview of three events in 2020 that will celebrate the cultural heritage of the Italian and Jewish communities.

Partnerships

Our commitment to support and collaborate with other Italian organizations continued. In 2019, this included financial and other support for a number of projects such as the book launch for the Italian Fallen Workers Memorial Project, “Land of Triumph and Tragedy: Voices of the Italian Fallen Workers,” the 2nd Annual *Librissimi* Book Festival and Mississauga ITALFEST. In the fall we held a VIP reception for the Director General for the Italians Abroad, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mr. Luigi Maria Vignali. We were also very proud to host a special dinner to welcome

the international food brand Eataly to Toronto, in advance of the opening of their first Canadian store. As the Major Sponsor of the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Ontario's inaugural "IT@CA" symposium, Villa Charities received significant brand visibility at this premier event that featured Italy's leading academic and industry leaders including Oscar Farinetti, founder of Eataly, Oliviero Toscani, world-renowned photographer and Angelo Gaja, President of GAJA Winery.

Looking Ahead to 2020

We are all very excited as we look ahead to 2020. The development of the next Strategic Plan for the VCI organization began earlier this year and will incorporate the valuable feedback we received from the Villa Charities Visioning Project conducted in 2018 with numerous stakeholder groups. The updated plan identifies the key strategic priorities that will serve as our roadmap and guide our initiatives over the next few years, as we strive to reaffirm our position as a cultural leader and destination for multigenerational Italian-Canadians and the community at large. We will share the new Strategic Plan at an upcoming Community Open Forum.

In 2020, we will also celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Columbus Centre, which opened in October 1980. The events to commemorate this occasion will be announced next year and we look forward to welcoming the community to join us for the festivities.

Villa Charities is proud to bring Italian culture to you in so many ways. I encourage our wonderfully diverse and engaged community to join us at the Villa Charities campus to take advantage of our many offerings in 2020. As President and CEO, I am committed to raising the level of excellence we deliver in all our programs, and as a team we will strive to make your experience with our organization better every day.

Finally, I would like to say THANK YOU to our staff, management, Board, residents, patrons, tenants and every one of you who continue to participate and support this great organization.

I wish you all the best this holiday season and a prosperous and successful new year!

Sincerely,



Anthony DiCaita
President and CEO
Villa Charities Inc.