



Ditta Rekem
REGISTERED NURSE,
VILLA COLOMBO
TORONTO

Ditta has been working at Villa Colombo Toronto for over 30 years. She has dedicated her career to the Italian community and has always made exceptional care a priority for her residents. “Seniors in long-term care facilities deserve support because no matter what life stage a person is in, dignity, respect and safety are all important components to maintaining one’s well-being,” says Ditta. While the pandemic has been scary and stressful for all health care workers, Ditta and her team quickly learned to adapt and implement new rules and regulations that were constantly changing. “We have incredible staff with diversity and passion for this line of work,” says Ditta, “Everyone has worked tirelessly to do their best during this pandemic, to make our families feel safe and confident in the care we provide.” Having worked at Villa Colombo for so long, Ditta understands the importance of donor funding and how every dollar counts when you’re looking after seniors. “Although we have great care [at Villa Colombo], there is always room for improvement. More funding [from donors] could help upgrade our technologies and systems, as well as provide more interactional and stimulatory activities for our residents.” Once the pandemic is over, Ditta looks forward to “not wearing a mask every day for 8 hours” and seeing her residents reunite with their families.

Enriching lives through experiences and services that honour Italian culture and heritage.

Cessidia is currently a Master of Business Administration (MBA) Candidate at Queen’s University’s Smith School of Business. She is passionate about mental health, education equality, and advocating for immigrants, women, and youth. In 2015, Cessidia established The Addolorata De Luca Leadership Scholarship in honour of her Nonna, a widowed mother of five who immigrated from Italy to Canada. “[Winning] the VCI Scholarship reminded me of how so many of our Italian ancestors never had the opportunity to obtain a post-secondary education. Therefore, it is my responsibility to use this degree to honour their sacrifices and continue the vital work of those that came before me,” says Cessidia. “Because of the generosity of donors who fund the Scholarship Program, I am one step closer to achieving my dream of having an MBA and working for Global Affairs Canada or the United Nations.”



Cessidia DeBiasio
VILLA CHARITIES
GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP AWARD
WINNER, 2020



Aida Haroun
VILLA CHARITIES
CULTURAL PROGRAM
PARTICIPANT

Aida was born in Cairo, Egypt to a multicultural family with Greek, Armenian and Turkish background. Now retired, her career spanned over 35 years of working as a Human Resources Consultant, Labour Relations Officer and Equity and Compliance Manager. “When I joined the Columbus Centre Athletic Club a few years ago, I discovered many other amazing cultural programs offered [by Villa Charities],” says Aida. “Now I participate in many programs such as Art & Aperitivo, Travel Through Italy, Cultural Tuesdays, Club del Libro, concerts and music events, and more.” These programs have enriched Aida’s knowledge and understanding of Italian culture and history, a culture she now feels connected to and inspired by. Despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, Aida was thrilled to continue participating in Villa Charities Cultural Programs via Zoom saying, “it was a lifesaver.” For Aida, cultural experiences are opportunities for leisure, learning and sharing experiences with others. Bringing people together through culture creates solidarity, tolerance and in the end, benefits everyone in the community.

