

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

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NAUTICAL LANDS GROUP

by WAYNE KARL



In the world of senior living, enriching the experiences of residents is everything. With a focus on helping people embrace a lifestyle characterized by growth, connection, convenience and a profound sense of community, Nautical Lands Group has found a way to stand out.

With Wellings Plus communities in Whitby, Calgary and Stittsville, Ont., Nautical Lands says it is the fastest-growing provider of 55-plus residential housing in Canada.

We spoke with Vice-President of Marketing Natalie Tommy for further insights on Nautical Lands, and why seniors should consider Wellings and the company's other offerings.

How are things coming along at Wellings of Whitby? I understand the first phase launched in the fall...

We are thrilled to be open and the members that are now living with us are enjoying their new homes and the camaraderie of their new neighbours. One of the most heartfelt things we see and are part of, is members pulling tables together to enjoy dinner with each other. This sense of connection in community transforms people right

in front of our eyes. We often hear members say they didn't realize they were alone so much, until they weren't. Smiles are usually in abundance.

The response has been excellent since we introduced the model four years ago. Construction delays have been plentiful but now we are getting settled in the first half of the building and the community is coming to life. We are unique in the lifestyle we offer active adults over 55, in that we don't offer healthcare. Wellings is where you belong, long before you need a retirement home. Full kitchens, guest suites, fitness gym, bars, restaurants, floor-to-ceiling windows and premium finishes are just the beginning.

Right from the beginning we have placed our members at the heart of all the decisions, and have a general manager with a hospitality background that is extensive. We are proud to be cooking and preparing all the food and beverage offerings on site, in our own kitchens, using our own recipes, many of which have come from our members. For example, The Sage Owl Bistro on the first floor is serving comfort foods

such as burgers and pizza, as well as more elevated food selections that include salmon, steak and seafood. The pizza oven is now functioning, and the choices expand based on the requests of the members. Once phase two opens this spring, we will have two more dining options – and an outdoor terrace that's licensed.

What does the second phase entail, and how will it differ from phase one, if at all?

Phase two will open in spring, and all suites and dining spaces are currently being finished. Phase two adds more dining and more apartment suites.

You have mentioned that the concept behind your communities is based on residents feeling seen, valued, heard and appreciated. Where does this philosophy originate, and how does it show up in Wellings of Whitby or your other communities?

We started operating traditional retirement homes with care more than 20 years ago. One of the recurring requests from residents was to be able to live in a community, and not take the care portion. Unfortunately,

that model just doesn't work. The Wellings model was born after many focus groups and requests to have this option. Wellings is where you want to be, not where you need to be.

At the core, we understand what every human being needs to thrive, and particularly thrive as we age. Freedom to design the lifestyle you want on your own terms, connection with like-minded people who are at a similar age, independence and a community that celebrates and respects you. In North America, productivity is highly valued, and when most people make decisions to retire or "refire" into a second career or passion they have, they become less visible.

Wellings, along with our members, are committed to creating a community that is greater than the sum of its parts. We've raised more than \$100,000 for charities that are important to our members. We are a stronger voice for seniors in all our communities.

We put the goals of the future, for our members, at the heart of our communities, design choices, food and beverage offerings, fitness programming and staffing choices. This all creates a sense of belonging and a stronger, happier community at large.

How do you select which locations you choose for development?

We study the market research and search out areas that are underserved. We started in rural Ontario, wanting to keep seniors in the communities they raised their families and worked in.

What was it about Whitby that led you to commit to Wellings of Whitby?

Location is walkable to services and shops. It's easy to get to, and not far from the major arteries. It has a lot of community amenities that seniors like.

How does Wellings of Whitby differ from what else might be available in that market?

We are a true 55-plus model. Most of our competition is care based, attracting older seniors who need care. Think of us has more of a hotel feel. You decide how you want to spend your days, enjoy the underground heated parking, concierge services and when you want to eat and with whom you want to eat with. We have some activities, but encourage the members to start social clubs of their own.

We also are 100 per cent rental communities.



What else about Nautical Lands would you like prospective residents to know?

Nautical Lands Group is a Canadian company that is wholly focused on seniors residential housing options. We are 23-plus years old and have communities in Ontario and Alberta.

What's next for Nautical Lands?

We have a lot of properties throughout Alberta and Ontario. A full list of locations is available at wellingscommunity.com.

nlgc.com

& on a personal note

How do you occupy your time when not at the office?

I visit with family and friends, walk our Australian Shepherd, Tinkerbell, paint landscapes and travel when I am able.

What do you consider your greatest inspiration, personally or professionally?

Just one? Nature is a constant source of inspiration. It's resilient, re-invents itself, and is always adapting. The women I choose to surround myself with are strong. My mother and sister are shining examples of courage, resilience, strength and compassion. My dad inspired me to work hard, be undaunted by failure, trust your instincts and do what lights you up. And currently, our ambassador, Kathie Donovan, has inspired me to grow, accept who I am, embrace compassion and kindness and to prepare for my own "refiring." My co-workers at Nautical Lands and Wellings have inspired me to collaborate more and trust that together we are stronger.

What's on your reading, podcast or TV binge watch these days?

The Let Them Theory by Mel Robbins, *The Gifts of Imperfection* by Brene Brown, *The Psychology of Colour...* generally anything about colour, and *Why We Talk*, by BJ Bueno. Next up *Open When*, by Dr Julie Smith.

On TV, the *Queer Eye* new series, *Ray Donovan*, *Landscape Artist of the Year* and anything on the DIY channels.