

Villa Charities Opens Italian Canadian Immigrant Tribute Installation

Public event celebrates remarkable history and contribution of Italian Canadians



VILLA CHARITIES HONOURS THE ITALIAN CANADIAN IMMIGRANT STORY

Villa Charities Italian Canadian Immigrant Tribute Installation. From (L to R) Christina Sorbara, Tribute Project donor, Sheref Sabawy, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism; Mary Pompili, Vice President, Marketing and Communications, Villa Charities Inc.; Joseph Arcuri, Board Chair of Villa Charities Inc.; Aldo Cundari, Villa Charities Foundation Board Director and Sculpture Artist; Marco DeVuono, President and CEO of Villa Charities Inc.; Kim Storey, Brown + Storey Architects Inc.; Hon. Marco Mendicino, MP, Eglinton-Lawrence; Anna Roberts, MP, King-Vaughan; Edward Sorbara, Tribute Project donor.

TORONTO, November 14, 2024 – After much anticipation, yesterday marked the official unveiling of the *Villa Charities Italian Canadian Immigrant Tribute Installation*, a stunning multi-faceted commemoration and public space that honours the Italian Canadian immigrant story.

With over 500 people in attendance, the unveiling event was officially underway at 10:00 am to celebrate the public opening of the first phase of the installation at the Columbus Centre. Hosted by Mary Pompili, Villa Charities' Vice President of Marketing and Communications, the event featured *Tribute Project* donors, Villa Charities executives and Board members, elected officials, representatives from Italian organizations, and members of the Italian Canadian community.



Speakers included Joseph Arcuri, Chair of the Villa Charities Board of Directors; Marco DeVuono, President and CEO of Villa Charities Inc.; Hon. Marco Mendicino, MP for Eglinton-Lawrence; Anna Roberts, MP for King-Vaughan; Sheref Sabawy, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism; Kim Storey, Brown + Storey Architects; and Aldo Cundari, sculpture artist and Villa Charities Foundation Board Director. Edward and Christina Sorbara, *Tribute Project* donors, concluded the public remarks with a heartwarming account of their family's ties to Villa Charities and their participation in the project.

After listening to the uplifting speeches, attendees made their way outside to witness the ceremonial ribbon cutting in the brisk autumn air.

"Italian Canadians have played such a pivotal role in developing the vibrant cultural traditions that exist in our community today," said Marco DeVuono, President and CEO of Villa Charities Inc. "Through the *Italian Canadian Immigrant Tribute* project, Villa Charities seeks to honour their legacy and inspire future generations. I am extremely proud to see that the vision for this important initiative has become a reality."

Designed by Brown + Storey Architects Inc., the *Immigrant Tribute* installation is located on the Villa Charities site at Lawrence Avenue West and Dufferin Street in Toronto, on the north-facing wall of the Columbus Centre. It showcases engraved name plaques dedicated to Canadians of Italian heritage and the year they immigrated to Canada, with a 'fluttering' effect that gives a sense of movement to the wall.

"The installation was designed as a vibrant gathering place and a destination to celebrate Italian Canadian immigrants and their contributions," said Kim Storey from Brown + Storey Architects Inc. "It is fitting that this permanent landmark is on the Villa Charities campus, the hub for the Italian Canadian community in Toronto and the GTA."

Accompanied by a landscaped area, the installation offers visitors a unique space to commemorate and reflect on their collective history.

Anchored against the backdrop of the installation and its hundreds of customized name plaques stands the striking bronze statue titled *Hope*, a representation of a 1950-period immigrant family with all their worldly possessions and future aspirations in tow. Imagined and created by marketing executive and artist Aldo Cundari, the full-scale statue is an important element of the *Tribute* installation.

"The installation and statue explore the struggles and successes of the Italian Canadian immigrant story," said Aldo Cundari, sculpture artist and Villa Charities Foundation Board Director, "I have intended for the viewer to get the sense of their brimming excitement for their country and new home, in stark contrast to the traditional immigrant sculpture depicting a depressed and frightened family."

Just after 11:00 am, the sculpture and installation were officially inaugurated for the cameras and the hundreds of attendees.



Yesterday's event launched the first phase of the installation, with plaque sales ongoing and new names to be added to the installation on a quarterly basis. Personalized single or double name plaques featuring the name of the family member and the year they immigrated to Canada are available for a \$1,000 donation. For each plaque purchase, a tax receipt will be issued for the maximum allowable amount.

Canadians nationwide not only have the opportunity to purchase plaques that will appear on the installation at the Columbus Centre, but also have their stories told on the *Villa Charities Immigrant Tribute* website. This allows donors to share family photographs and histories with the public, preserving their legacies and acting as a useful resource for future generations. In addition, as part of the physical installation, current donors can scan a QR code on the information panel to find on which section of the panel their family's plaque is located.

The funds raised from the *Tribute Project* through Villa Charities Foundation will support senior care, youth services, education and scholarships, cultural programming, and capital needs.

For more information on the *Villa Charities Italian Canadian Immigrant Tribute* project, including how to purchase a name plaque, visit villacharitiesimmigranttribute.com.

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About Villa Charities Inc.

Villa Charities Inc. (VCI) is a registered charity and non-profit organization that enriches lives through experiences and services that honour Italian culture and heritage. For more than 50 years across the GTA, Villa Charities has provided cultural and educational programs and supported culturally sensitive long-term care and independent living apartments for seniors. VCI fulfills their mandate through a broad range of activities, services and facilities, both directly and in conjunction with its affiliates and independent organizations. Affiliates include Columbus Centre and Joseph D. Carrier Art Gallery; Villa Colombo Homes for the Aged Inc. in Toronto; Villa Colombo Seniors Centre (Vaughan) Inc. Di Poce Centre; and Italian Canadian Benevolent Seniors Apartments Corporation/Casa Abruzzo Benevolent Corporation with apartments for independent seniors (Caboto Terrace, Casa Del Zotto and Casa Abruzzo). Each of these organizations is an integral part of the Villa Charities family with separate legal status and its own governance Board. Villa Charities has been certified as a Great Place to Work® and named on the 2024 Best Workplaces™ for Giving Back list, which recognize the organization's commitment to creating an inclusive and positive workplace with a strong community focus. For more information visit villacharities.com.

About Villa Charities Foundation

Villa Charities Foundation supports experiences and services that honour Italian culture and heritage. As the charitable arm of Villa Charities, the Foundation provides crucial funding for areas such as senior care, youth services, education and scholarships, cultural programming, and capital needs. For more information, visit villacharities.com/give.



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