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## Swan Valley Lodge celebrates 50 years of “home”

CRESTON — Over the last 50 years, Swan Valley Lodge staff have changed, individuals in care have changed, and the building has changed, but one thing has remained the same: the long-term care home is a place seniors of the Creston Valley can call home.

“I could not be happier with the care that the staff members at Swan Valley Lodge provide. They create an atmosphere of family and a safe and welcoming environment,” says Carol Cox, whose mother Stephanie Ruczak lived in the care home until she passed away in 2017. “We loved our mom so very much and could not have asked for better care.”

Today, Interior Health and the community are celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Swan Valley Lodge, which currently offers care to 90 individuals through 84 permanent beds and six convalescent/respice beds.

“I’d like to congratulate Swan Valley Lodge for 50 years of quality care to local seniors,” says Parliamentary Secretary for Seniors Anne Kang. “Every day dedicated staff are making a difference in the people they care for and the families who love them. Swan Valley Lodge is a place people with complex care needs can truly call home.”

More than 75 health-care assistants, eight registered nurses, 26 licensed practical nurses, 10 recreation workers, 35 support services workers, three maintenance employees, and five rehabilitation services staff make sure individuals at Swan Valley Lodge get the care and support they need every day.

“The dedication and commitment of our staff are at the heart of what makes Swan Valley Lodge a home for local seniors. It is this dedication and caring that makes today so worthy of celebration,” says IH Board Chair Doug Cochrane.

“It is great to hear that the most commonly used words to describe Swan Valley Lodge by the individuals in our care, their families, visitors and staff are ‘home’ and ‘family,’” says manager Walter Felitsyn.

Swan Valley Lodge opened in November 1968 following major planning, primarily by the local Senior Citizens’ Housing Society which recognized the needs of citizens of the Creston Valley and surrounding area.

After 25 years of service to the community, an expansion in 1995 saw the construction of the Mountain View Terrace and Rosalie Harris units to expand the facility and provide additional space. Then, in 2005, Interior Health updated the care environment of the home’s Purcell Way and Pioneer wings.

“Recently, as I was sitting in the front entrance area at Swan Valley Lodge, it quickly became apparent how happy and friendly the home is. I was warmly greeted by anyone who passed by, people in our care, family, and staff alike. I don’t think anyone knew who I was, but all made me feel at home,” says Jeff Betker, health service administrator for long-term care in the East Kootenay.

Swan Valley Lodge provides recreation and community-building services including daily entertainment such as live music, and a variety of activities for the individuals living at Swan Valley Lodge as well as Adult

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Day Program clients from the community. There is an on-site hair salon, kitchenettes and entertainment spaces in each unit, as well as gardens with gazebos for shade and outdoor enjoyment.

Not to be lost in the mix are Swan Valley's furry friends: Providing official animal therapy jobs are two live-in cats (Purcella and Cali), volunteer visitor dogs (Raven, Ebony, Max and Timber), as well as other animal friends who love to visit residents for a good pet and comfort.

One of the past individuals in care at Swan Valley Lodge wrote this poem for the staff in July 2016:

### **Angels**

*Some say there are no angels on earth.  
That's not true, I say.  
They are here in Swan Valley Lodge,  
Serving in every way.*

*I'm greeted with the warmest smiles  
And the touch of a gentle hand,  
I may be called by other names,  
Still all know who I am.*

*Meals are served with loving care,  
They ask if I'm okay,  
Having those angels always near,  
Brightens another day.*

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