

# A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

A company provides free apartments for relatives of long-term patients **By Alexis Dobranowski**



Barry Green's spirit of philanthropy was inspired by his mom Goldie Feldman.

**IMAGINE THE STRESS OF HAVING A** loved one sick in the hospital for several weeks. Now imagine that hospital hours away from home. For the relatives of some Sunnybrook patients, one generous family – and their business – aims to ease that stress.

Greenrock Property Management Limited, a Toronto-based, private multi-residential property management company, and its chairman Barry Green have embarked on a new partnership with Sunnybrook. The company has dedicated several units as no-cost apartments to families of long-stay Sunnybrook patients who must travel significant distances to receive treatment. These patients come from far-reaching corners of the province to access Sunnybrook's state-of-the-art care.

The Greenrock suites mean families don't have to commute or incur hotel costs to be with their loved ones. "Often, patients are children or babies, which helps make the program all the more rewarding," Barry says.

Barry is a long-time supporter of Sunnybrook. Most recently, Barry, along with mom Goldie Feldman and three of his siblings, David, Karen and Donna Green, made a family pledge of \$1 million in

support of the new Breast Cancer Centre. Now, Barry and wife Laurie are passing on the tradition of philanthropy to Cole, 14, and his sister Kimberley, 17.

"My kids see it all the time," Barry says. "I work within a family business, and increasingly our board is focused on succession planning. Integral to this process is the opportunity of instilling our values into the next generation. They are learning that philanthropy is a part of the contract, if you will."

When Cole received a pledge form for the Terry Fox Run at his school, the teenager found over 20 donors in less than a day. It's a memory that makes dad Barry proud. "He was proactive in his approach to philanthropy, and he's only 14," Barry says. "He's been a real leader in that respect."

Barry credits his mother Goldie for helping to instil the spirit of giving in him and his brother and sisters. "Philanthropy was always a key part of our family ethic and philosophy," he says. "It's always a cliché to say 'give back to the community', but truly, that was a given since childhood for all of us."

Goldie has made philanthropy her life's mission in recent years, he says. She was

the family's anchor in the most recent gift. "I'm proud of Mom because I see that she gives in a balanced and strategic way," he explains. "I'm very proud of what she's done."

Barry and Greenrock see the Sunnybrook suites program as a way to share their family values with employees. "Who doesn't want to make a difference? Our staff are no different, and they feel great when they participate." For example, staff members volunteer their time to paint and refurbish the Sunnybrook suites, and prepare the units for the new families as they arrive.

"These sorts of initiatives are great for staff morale, especially when owners and staff physically work together in a fun and informal way," he adds. "It makes people feel great, seeing first-hand that they are working for a company whose owners really care for them and their community. And, it was an opportunity to give breadth to our philanthropic approach. There are many different facets to giving back, and we are continually exploring new and original ways of doing so."

Members of Toronto's real-estate industry are extremely generous, he says, but more can be done. "If you are a private landlord, perhaps you might consider this opportunity of taking a unit or two off the market so as to participate in this initiative. We have performed all of the administrative legwork setting up this program and would be honoured to share this information," Barry says. "While we hope our program will continue for many years, donating the use of suites doesn't need to be a permanent arrangement if the owner wishes to re-rent their suites."

The generations of philanthropic support from the Feldman and Green families and their businesses demonstrate the layers of support that are possible. Barry hopes the community will look to Goldie as a role model.

"Charity can mean more than signing the cheque," he says. "We look at support in an innovative way." ■