

# Walking program helps veterans stand, salute

November 2021

November 11 is the most reverent day of the year at the CapitalCare Kipnes Centre for Veterans. Staff and families work together with purpose to ensure veterans participate in Remembrance Day in ways that are important to them. Readings are rehearsed, uniforms are dry cleaned, medals are polished and pinned precisely. Everything is planned and executed with military precision.

But the moment Ray Lewis - who normally needs a wheelchair for mobility - stood up with determination during the national anthem was a surprise no one expected.

Ray, 96, is a veteran of the Second World War who served with the Canadian army in Holland and Italy. He is one of the residents who benefit from enhanced exercise opportunities through the recreation therapy department thanks to funding by Veterans Affairs Canada. Ray participates in one of the programs - the enhanced walking program - once or twice a week, in addition to regular physiotherapy.

“Remembrance Day brings back such strong emotions for veterans, including those living with dementia,” says Bonnie Roberts, Site Director at the Kipnes Centre. “Veterans feel honour for the country they fought so hard for, and they feel it is their duty to stand and salute when they hear “God Save the Queen” or “O Canada. This program helped to restore Ray’s strength so he could stand with confidence and pride.”

The pageantry of the day stirred up so many of these moments: one resident who doesn’t speak more than one word at a time said, “I’m loving this;” another who recently moved in heard some familiar fiddle music during the Legion-style social after the ceremony and got up to dance. Staff worked tirelessly behind the scenes to honour residents’ wishes.

“Thank you to all our staff who went above and beyond to support our veterans in the ways that were important to them,” says Bonnie. “This is person-centred care at its best.”



**Kipnes Centre for Veterans resident Ray Lewis (centre) stands with assistance from his daughter Dyann Lewis (right) and staff member Myrena Reiger (left) during O Canada November 11, 2021.**