



Creating memorable moments at Tapestry

at Victoria Harbour

A new senior living community leads the way in the third annual ICAA NuStep Beacon and Pinnacle Awards

by Julie King, MS

What does it take to be named the number one wellness-based community in North

America after only one year in operation? It starts with a bold mission: *"We create memorable moments in thriving, connected communities where individuals experience healthy and fulfilled lives."*

This commitment, wholeheartedly embodied by Tapestry at Victoria Harbour in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, defines the grow-

Tapestry at Victoria Harbour residents and employees create wellness experiences together. Bocce tournaments, cultural celebrations and cooking demonstrations are examples



ing community’s purpose and focus. It not only guides daily decisions and operations, but also empowers its employees and residents.

Woven through the fabric of this senior living community is a wellness-centric approach that inspires residents to remain social, healthy and engaged. “We see ourselves as trailblazers as it relates to wellness,” states

Adena Waffle, interim senior vice president, Tapestry, who played a key role in the design and development of Tapestry’s newest community. “We align our culture to wellness because we truly believe it is the roadmap for individuals to live longer and healthier lives,” Waffle continues. And, by aging well, “they can continue to pursue their purpose and passions.”

Welcome to Tapestry at Victoria Harbour, recognized by the International Council on Active Aging® and NuStep, LLC, with an ICAA NuStep Pinnacle Award as 2021’s top-ranked “Best in Wellness” community. The first-time applicant also received an ICAA NuStep Beacon Award as one of 25 senior

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Located on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Tapestry at Victoria Harbour boasts waterfront views, urban convenience and opportunities for active living in a vibrant neighborhood

living communities lighting the way for the industry. These awards highlight the new community's commitment, creativity and culture plus honor its exceptional achievements and contributions to an evolving industry. [Ed. See the box on page 31 for more about the ICAA NuStep awards program.]

Reflecting a wellness brand

More than 20 years ago, Tapestry emerged from a vision of Concert, a Canadian real estate corporation headquartered in Vancouver. With a goal to build resilient, inclusive, sustainable communities, and dedicated to a people-first future, Concert is owned by union and management pension plans representing more than 200,000 Canadians. Its portfolio includes Tapestry active-aging communities, along with condominiums, rental apartments, industrial and commercial properties and public infrastructure projects across the country.

In the late 1990s, David Podmore, who cofounded Concert and now serves as chair-

man, president and chief executive officer, had the foresight to consider redefining retirement living as Canada's population aged. Upon researching the industry and finding primarily institutional, healthcare-focused settings at the time, the company recognized an opportunity to serve a new and emerging generation of older adults with diverse life experiences and greater expectations.

Rather than adopt the prevailing healthcare model, Concert intentionally chose a hospitality-style, independent-living approach with wellness underpinning all operations to support resident longevity and independence.

"While offering care is a service we can provide, it's not our identity," says Waffle. That identity "is reflected in our commitment to engage residents and employees in contributing to the energy and spirit that defines our Tapestry feeling and inspires our brand, 'Embrace A New Age.'"

Mark Andrew, Tapestry's now-former senior vice president, concurs with Waffle. In an interview for this article prior to his departure, Andrew notes that Tapestry's "identity is more engaging this new age and emphasizing all we can do."

The brand's first community, Tapestry at Arbutus Walk, opened in Vancouver in 2003 and set the foundation for the future. Tapestry at Village Gate West followed in 2008 in Toronto, Ontario, and then Tapestry at Wesbrook Village in 2010 on the University of British Columbia's Vancouver campus. The three communities, all previous winners of an ICAA NuStep Beacon Award, each received a 2021 nod as well.

Opened in early 2021, the newest Tapestry location in Victoria combines urban convenience with a waterfront location. The contemporary studio to two-bedroom-plus-den homes are available to own or rent, some with views overlooking the harbor and mountains beyond. Amenities include a

concierge service, on-site salon and spa, full-service restaurant and pub, fitness studio, wellness center, media room, games room, garden courtyard plus an expansive rooftop terrace for gardening, lounging and resident events.

Each Tapestry location reflects the brand identity in four key pillars:

- *Relevance and resilience*: meaningful participation in community, exploring existing or new passions
- *Fitness and movement*: individual fitness plans customized to personal goals, interconnection of physical and mental well-being
- *Spirituality and mindfulness*: blending self-awareness and personal values, finding joy in everyday life
- *Food and nutrition*: dietitian-reviewed and seasonally rotating menus, science-based culinary offerings, menu and venue choices

These pillars inform local plans, programs and priorities.

Operating with excellence

Initially, Tapestry partnered with various third-party operators to gain more experience and education to excel in senior living. In November 2018, the company assumed self-management.

“As part of taking on self-management, we explored and defined what our operating principles were,” recalls Waffle. “It wasn’t about simply looking at other retirement communities or senior housing options, but also seeing beyond to envision what we could be.”

To deliver the Tapestry mission and brand experience, the employees at each location are guided by and empowered to make decisions and take actions according to these operating principles:

- *We make the difference*: We commit to lifelong learning and personal development; we accept that mistakes happen.



Common areas at Tapestry’s Victoria Harbour community are designed to ‘encourage interaction and nurture vibrancy’

- *We personalize service*: We treasure our residents’ unique story and life experience; we sweat the small stuff; we solve problems and reinforce that life is to be fully lived.
- *We innovate and excel*: We are committed to evolve; we strive to set the industry standard for excellence.

“Tapestry is based on curiosity; observing what’s around us and questioning,” Waffle explains. “We knew that there was an opportunity to be different.

“For example, at Tapestry at Victoria Harbour, we re-envisioned the dining experience,” Waffle continues. “In this new location, chefs not only prepare the meals but also serve the residents, taking time to share their passion for food while developing a relationship with the diner.” By eliminating traditional roles, such as the server, the organization believes it has redefined the dining experience and established a new benchmark for service excellence.

“We don’t just tell employees what to do, but rather, ask what they can do and what they want to do,” Andrew points out. The goal is to “create new experiences for the employees and residents. It’s a more integrated approach.”

Consider the resident assistants (RAs), who historically deliver medications or perform shower standbys. At Tapestry, the RAs have extended their core role to encourage residents to participate in activities that support health and wellness. “Many RAs lead stretching classes, Nordic poling excursions or our favorite ‘Morning Glory’ dance parties,” says Waffle.

At Tapestry, wellness isn’t a department. All employees are part of the wellness team, and there are no traditional divisions such as the food and beverage group or the housekeeping staff. Many employees consider their role

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Vancouver Island offers residents of Tapestry at Victoria Harbour year-round opportunities for outdoor fun—from forest walks and beachfront barbecues, to winter sports in the mountains

to be “a calling,” Waffle mentions, and given their belief in Tapestry’s mandate, have pursued wellness certification.

All Tapestry organizational charts are “flipped on their heads,” with residents at the top and executives at the bottom. “So much of what drives us comes from our residents and employees,” Waffle notes. “It’s not from the executive team. We’re just good at asking questions and being observers.”

Embracing a new age

Everything that Tapestry offers is filtered through the lens of wellness and measured against the seven dimensions of wellness: physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual, environmental and occupational.

“At Tapestry, it’s our focal point—everything we see, feel, touch and experience is a part of wellness,” Waffle says. “We see wellness as an approach to living that inspires and nourishes the mind, soul and body to create an abundant state of individual well-being.”

The daily calendar can include:

- *Physical:* fitness classes, community walks, gardening
- *Emotional:* intergenerational programs
- *Intellectual:* brain fitness programs, courses and lectures, technology classes
- *Social:* choir and music programs, excursions
- *Spiritual:* meditation, outings to places of worship

- *Environmental:* opportunities on-site and with local environmental groups
- *Occupational:* philanthropic endeavors

The programming is a shared responsibility and commitment. “We don’t ‘do’ for residents or ‘entertain,’ but rather partner together to create wellness opportunities,” Andrew elaborates. He adds that “by focusing on engaging events and enabling activities,” Tapestry fosters its unique environment.

According to Tapestry at Victoria Harbour’s general manager, Amber Reis, “employees and residents are most proud that we are developing a shared culture of wellness, which is being co-created through a strong partner-

ship to reinforce our focus on wellness across all dimensions.” Resident input, participant feedback, continual communication, listening and observation are all integral to developing successful, fulfilling offerings. Currently, residents lead initiatives such as the pub and mixer night and gardening club.

Not only do garden club members make the community’s fifth-floor patio more appealing, but they also cultivate herbs used in the menu, “thereby creating an experience that is both nurtured and enjoyed by our community members,” Reis says.

Residents and employees have co-created experiences including cooking demos, bocce tournaments, cultural celebrations, current affairs discussions, and workouts that utilize nearby parks and walking paths along the ocean. When residents expressed interest in the adjacent Lawn Bowling Club in Victoria, the community developed a partnership with it. And during the 2020 Olympic Games held last summer in Tokyo, residents and employees wore apparel to support their

country of choice, enjoyed menus representative of Japan, participated in Japanese language and culture discussions, and recreated competitive events with a personal twist.

Reis emphasizes the importance of being open to and interested in where people’s passions lie. She describes a resident that started a master class series on “nurse” trees, which shelter and support life for smaller, less hardy young trees and plants growing beneath them. The series included a presentation, photos from the surrounding area and walks on local trails. “I had no idea about nurse trees, and this just brought out individual curiosity and a real sharing among residents,” she recalls.

All the programming is designed to encourage Tapestry at Victoria Harbour residents to “Embrace a New Age”—the community’s tagline reinforcing the ability to pursue life’s purpose and passion at any age. “We encourage, challenge and model wellness to highlight that age has no limit,” Reis states, “and that active aging begins with one positive step forward in a lifelong journey.”

In fact, prospective residents are asked what they can bring to the community and how they can contribute. “This is a real stopper,” Andrew says, “because it makes them think—I’m not just going to come here to stay, but I’m going to be a participant in this community and part of the fabric of Tapestry.”

As new residents move in, the wellness team meets with them to learn about their passions and discover how they can draw these individuals into existing offerings or create new ones. Reis explains that community members are empowered “to be accountable for nurturing Tapestry’s energy and passion for wellness as we look to each other for ideas and suggestions.”

Making memorable moments

To “create memorable moments,” employees at Tapestry at Victoria Harbour are laser-focused on listening to residents, helping to identify their passion and enabling them to pursue it. “We see wellness as an indi-

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Guiding lights inspire the industry

The ICAA NuStep “Best in Wellness” Awards honor senior living communities, community centers and CEOs whose achievements, innovations, directions or commitments in wellness stand out as guiding lights for all organizations and individuals in the active-aging industry.

Both the International Council on Active Aging and NuStep, LLC, are longtime champions of excellence in wellness in older-adult settings. Launched in 2003, the ICAA Innovators Awards highlighted award-winning wellness initiatives, environments and products for 15 years. And NuStep, a leading manufacturer of recumbent cross-trainers, sponsored the NuStep Pinnacle Award

program from 1998 to 2018 to recognize senior centers and communities that enrich lives through comprehensive wellness programming.

In 2019, ICAA and NuStep partnered to create the ICAA NuStep Beacon Award to reward the 25 “Best in Wellness” senior living communities in North America each year. This year, the awards program has expanded to three categories:

- Senior living—independent living, assisted living, skilled nursing, memory care and life-plan communities; short-stay rehabilitation settings
- Community centers—senior centers, parks and recreation facilities, adult day services

- CEOs—leading executives committed to thriving wellness cultures

The joint endeavor also carries on NuStep’s Pinnacle Award mission. The top five winners in each category earn the ICAA NuStep Pinnacle Award as a commendation of outstanding performance.

As of press time, the approaching deadline to apply for an award is August 31, 2022. Winners will be announced November 8 at the ICAA Conference, Leadership Summit and Expo 2022 in Greater Orlando, Florida. To learn more about the awards program, visit <https://beaconaward.icaa.cc>. For details on ICAA’s annual meeting, see <https://icaaconference.icaa.cc>.

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vidual and personalized journey, where new concepts and experiences can be embraced at any age,” Waffle states. “It’s about understanding each resident’s unique perspective shaped by their life story, and catering to each individual’s needs to create an intensely personal experience.”

Andrew adds, “When we talk about active aging, it really is being active in a way in which people choose to be.”

One Tapestry at Village Gate West resident who used a walker for support wanted to stroll the top of the CN Tower in Toronto, the tallest freestanding structure in the Western Hemisphere. But assistive walkers are not allowed there. She began practicing urban poling to be able to walk upright without the walker. When the employees took a group to the tower, she accomplished her goal.

“This is obviously a memorable moment and an example of embracing a new age,” Andrew comments. “We always think,

what will our residents be talking about to their sons or daughters at the end of the day, and how can we continue to create those moments that enable people to be relevant. Because nobody, whatever stage of life they are in, is irrelevant.”

Employees are as eager as residents to create these special experiences. “When we talk with our team, we’re blessed that each of them has their own unique ways of fostering memorable moments, and then taking them to the next level,” Andrew says. “At the end of the day, or the end of their shift, if they’ve done this, then we win.”

Evolving the experience

Key to the success of Tapestry at Victoria Harbour is confidence in virtually unlimited potential and a passionate commitment to evolution.

“Tapestry is a journey, and the Tapestry of today is certainly not the Tapestry of yesterday or tomorrow,” Andrew comments. “We’re not going to do the same thing every day. That’s what’s so exciting—it’s not clearly defined because our residents are going to continue to evolve, and they play a critical role in what success looks like. We will listen and respond as we evolve as well.”

According to Waffle, the team must operate thoughtfully and deliberately. “It’s important for us to slow down in order to speed up. It’s easy to go after a quick fix to fill a void that exists; it’s harder to sit in it and to allow time to really make intentional steps. We don’t want to do what just comes naturally to fix a scenario, but to think about why we might do this or that, and why we might want to do something different.”

Tapestry is also integrating more with the local area, community partners, and all that is happening in the neighborhood. “We’ve had residents move in that are super engaged in their own organizations, and now they’re interacting with the two seamlessly,” Waffle adds. A perfect example of this community integration is Tapestry’s

involvement in 2022 as the first “seniors” organization to participate in the Vancouver Pride Parade, the largest parade in Western Canada held each year to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community.

With its award-winning communities, Tapestry continues to blaze a trail with cultures that support longer, healthier and fulfilled lives for residents. “We’re really delivering on what we tell people we’re about,” emphasizes Waffle. Recognition of the Victoria Harbour location as the top-ranked ICAA/NuStep “Best in Wellness” community “is the culmination of the vision of the people at Concert who started the Tapestry division.”

Julie King, MS, has been a certified group exercise instructor and personal trainer for more than 25 years. She holds multiple certifications and a master’s degree in science (kinesiology). Over her career, King has led virtually every class format—including indoor cycling, mat pilates, yoga, kickboxing, boot camp and aquatics—at commercial health clubs, corporate fitness centers, wellness centers, schools and online. She also has served as a fitness director, fitness/wellness coordinator, health club manager and a contributing editor for Club Business International magazine. King has been published in Club Industry, Club Solutions, Campus Recreation, National Fitness Trade Journal, Recreation Management and Fitness Management. She can be reached at julie.king1@comcast.net.

Images courtesy of Tapestry at Victoria Harbour

Resources

Internet

Concert Properties

www.concertproperties.com/

ICAA NuStep “Best in Wellness” Awards

<https://beaconaward.icaa.cc/>

International Council on Active Aging (ICAA)

www.icaa.cc

NuStep, LLC

www.nustep.com

Tapestry

<https://discovertapestry.com/>

Tapestry at Victoria Harbour

<https://tapestryvictoria.com/>