

NEWHOMES



Turning a pine cone into an owl, one of several activities provided for kids at last month's Home Show — Home Improvement Edition, held at the International Centre in Mississauga, Ont.

A few tips for keeping kids busy this spring break



MARTIN SLOFSTRA
EDITOR'S
NOTE

First things first, it was so disappointing and sad to hear of the cancellation of The Home Show/Canada Blooms just this past Thursday night.

For the last 10 years, this has been a must-attend for me, both the opening day media tour, and later during the 10-day event, an opportunity to take it all in with family and friends.

Mostly I feel badly for the dedicated staff and numerous volunteers who put on such a great show, but as the organizers say, 'We look forward to seeing you at next year's event.'

In fact, I was all set to write about the show highlighting all the activities planned for kids which is a growing and welcome trend.

We had even prepared a video on the topic (go to www.torontosun.com/life/homes and see a few things you can do with kids), it's from last month's Home Show — Home Improvement Edition, which ran Feb. 14-16 at the International Centre in Mississauga, Ont.

The video, among other things, demonstrates how home shows are becoming more experience-oriented — meaning there's a lot more opportunity for hands-on activities — which of course, is exactly what you need if kids are involved.

To demonstrate the point, we show three segments: simple crafts like turning a pine cone into an owl; how to build your own plant terrarium in a mason jar (courtesy of Kate from Kate's Gardens); and handyman Jordan Spear demonstrates how to build (and play with) a homemade Jenga set.

Spear also has some good advice for getting your kids involved in the next home renovation project.

"Simple tasks like a helping hand, painting or cleaning up are a great way to start," he says. "When kids feel they're contributing to the final renovation result, it can do wonders for their self-esteem. Actively doing tasks together is a great way to bring the whole family together."

The video, by the way, was produced and edited by 16-year-old local 'whiz kid' Jacob Klug, who heads up a local video production company called Creme Media.

Klug has developed numerous videos for his real estate clients throughout the GTA but making a video at a home improvement show was especially a "great and new experience for the team and I," showing "just how much fun it can be creating a children focused video around home improvement."

Seniors housing can help cure hallway medicine



RICHARD LYALL
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Imagine you have visited your elderly mother at a hospital, and you see a lineup of patients in the hallway waiting to see a doctor. Why? They have nowhere to go.

Maybe you don't have to imagine. Maybe this has been your reality recently. Maybe you've swapped stories with other patients' family members as they wait alongside you for their elderly loved one to receive treatment.

The logjam of elderly patients doesn't end there. Many hospitals simply don't have the facilities to accommodate them with the respect they deserve — and that's partly because not enough transitional housing near hospitals has been built.

Michael Fenn, the founding CEO of the Mississauga Halton Local Health Integration Network, was asked by the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario to identify solutions to hallway medicine. In response, he wrote the report "to Cure Hallway Medicine: Building Targeted Housing for Ontario's Seniors."

The discussions that led to this report were driven by builder/developer Phil Rubinoff, who recognized that more temporary housing is required for outpatients and others, while some patients needed different solutions while undergoing care.

That means being more flexible about the choices made to care for the larger number of patients: building more hospitals, long-term care homes, palliative care wards in hospitals, and similar infrastructure for a whole generation of baby boomers will be too much for taxpayers to bear.

"We must embrace the principle of the right treatment, by the right provider, in the right place, at the right time, for the lowest cost to the taxpayer," Fenn says.

We all need hospitals for complex care, surgery, medical research and education. But these facilities should

not be the primary providers of healthcare services for patients dealing with chronic disease, minor or recurrent medical episodes, or recuperating from hospital-based medical or surgical procedures.

The key to handling this issue, Fenn suggests, may be building housing that simultaneously reduces the volume of patients seeking admission to hospitals and provides accommodation better suited to the needs of patients ready to leave hospitals.

In his report, "to Cure Hallway Medicine: Building Targeted Housing for Ontario's Seniors," Fenn came up with four recommendations to handle the "grey tsunami" gradually coming into force in Ontario:

1. Ontario's public investment focus should be on building seniors' accommodation to avoid hospital admissions and to reduce the length of hospital stays.

2. Wherever practical and medically sound, chronic disease should be treated in the home and in the community, rather than in hospitals.

3. Ontario must work with municipalities to free up suitable land assets for seniors' housing and adjust land-use planning objectives to produce a range of seniors' housing.

4. Use tax and pension policies to generate more seniors' housing.

If there is something industry can do to keep seniors out of hallways and create long-term solutions, this is an important discussion for everyone, including government. It was encouraging to see Health Minister Christine Elliott recently announce she will improve the staffing model to ensure that there are more registered nurses in long-term care homes, and introduce "reactivation care centres" to free up hospital beds. It's a great step.

So, how do we cure hallway medicine? Collaboration between government, industry and the public through dialogue, planning and being mindful about building the right housing for the future.

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