

WILMA WIERENGA

When Wilma Wierenga moved into Emmanuel Home in 2012, there was something about the natural setting that made her feel at home right away.

"I lived most of my life in the country so I liked the surroundings right away. The courtyards, especially in the summer when everything is in bloom, are so nice," says the cheerful senior, who called Neerlandia, north of Edmonton, home for 51 years.

Wilma and her husband Martin moved to Edmonton in 2001 to live nearer their adult children, settling in Henday Village in the city's west side. With Martin's passing in 2007 and her decision to stop driving after knee surgery, Wilma made a practical choice in 2012 to move into Emmanuel Home.

She loves the convenience, a church next door (Trinity Christian Reformed Church) that she can walk to, a doctor on site if needed, prescriptions can be picked up in the complex. "It didn't take any time to adjust. I never had any qualms about moving here," she says.

The mother of six children was a popular school librarian from 1974 to 1994, bowing out just as computers were making their way into Neerlandia Christian Public School. "I loved it," she says of her job, which was a labour of love. "To get to know children's literature, to find out the good authors for children."

Wilma and her husband enjoyed reading throughout their married life, sharing their love of books with their children. Emmanuel Home's library has enabled her to continue to feed her appreciation for a good book, especially novels. Wilma knows a decent library when she sees one and Emmanuel's still holds her interest five years after taking out her first book.

"As you get to use it more, you find books you didn't think you would like and then I find that I do!" She says. "I like to get into series. I always have a book going."

Chicken Soup is a book club of sorts at Emmanuel, where book-lovers can read a story aloud to fellow aficionados over a cup of soup. Wilma is an active participant, but it's just one of the regular events at Emmanuel that stirs her enthusiasm for the community life the residence offers her. Music is another passion, so she helps choose the songs and provide the song sheets for after-dinner hymn sings.

"You're free to be as active as you like here, take any or all of the bus trips that are offered," Wilma says. "It's a Christian atmosphere and yet people come from a great variety of backgrounds, so meeting new residents is always interesting."