

Celebrating 80 years of love



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By Kristena Schutt-Moore

Rita Phillips is known as the Chateau's resident volunteer and baker. She is often baking for the building community and is the first to offer help to anyone in need. Friends say she always provides rides to the grocery store, helps with a sick pet, offers a shoulder to cry on or lends an ear. On Thursday, April 23 she turned 80 so friends and family decided that COVID-19 wasn't going to stop them from making her feel special. On Saturday, April 25 they surprised her. A small group of friends and family gathered below her balcony at the Chateau and began singing happy birthday to her. The organizer of this celebration was Gail Ross, "Turning 80 is a milestone that shouldn't be without a grand celebration. This is why I wanted to make her day as memorable as possible! It is my hope that my sister-in-law feels like the queen she is." Phillips was born on April 26, 1940, in Winnipeg, Manitoba to Rose Rita and George Barthelette. She has two daughters, 10 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren, and all sent their love, though some of them couldn't attend the gathering due to social distancing restrictions. Ross said, "Although away from family because of this pandemic, her heart is full and we are all with her in spirit and celebration." Phillips met with those gathered outside her building while observing physical distancing rules, for a short time to talk and thank them for their thoughtfulness and collect her birthday balloons.