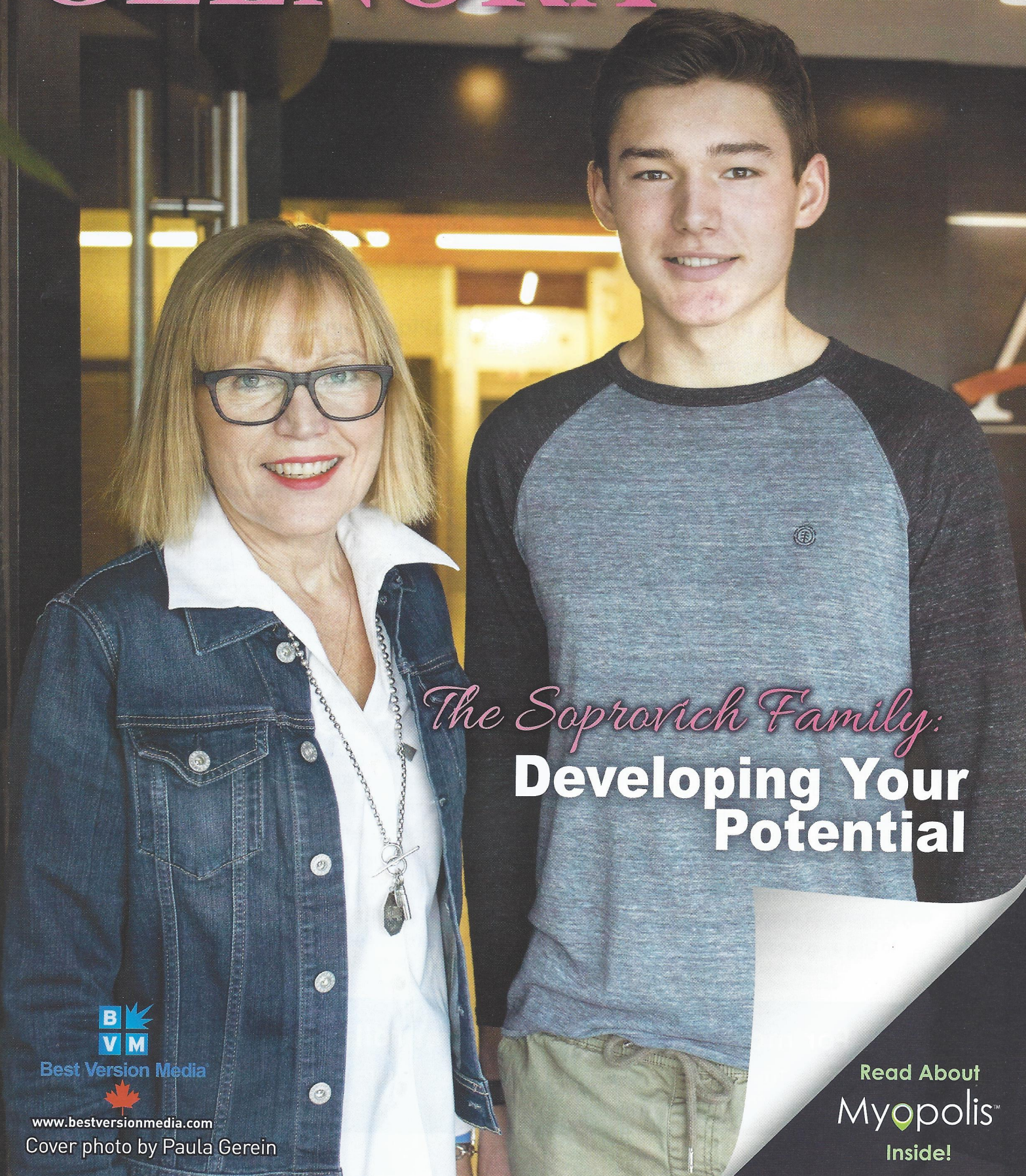


February 2018

# Neighbours of **GLENORA**

An exclusive magazine serving the  
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Parkview, & Laurier Heights



## *The Soprovich Family:* **Developing Your Potential**



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Cover photo by Paula Gerein

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Inside!

A photograph of Marie Soprovich and her son Levi standing in front of the Aquarian logo. Marie is on the left, wearing a denim jacket over a white shirt and a dark skirt. Levi is on the right, wearing a grey and black long-sleeved shirt and khaki pants. The background shows a reception desk with the Aquarian logo and the tagline 'Artisans in Home Renovation'.

# The Soprovich Family: Developing Your Potential

By Tonya Lambert | Photos by Paula Gerein

*We would like to thank The Skin Enhancement Centre for bringing you this month's cover story.*

A core value held by Marie Soprovich and her late husband Doug is the need to develop the human potential that of yourself and others, in order to bring about positive change in the world. This value lies at the heart of everything the couple did – from the life they built together, the company they founded and the family they created. It continues to form the foundation for the lives and decisions of Marie and son Levi.

## Developing the Human Potential

Marie Soprovich met her late husband Doug in the early 1990s through The Pursuit of Excellence, a program dedicated to self-discovery and the development of the human potential. They quickly bonded over their shared appreciation for art, beauty and nature as well as their desire to develop their own potential and to help others do so, too.

In 1991, they founded Aquarian Networks Corp., an art firm dedicating to transforming the world through beauty, peace and goodwill. Doug was a talented sculptor and painter, who created breathtakingly beautiful works to sell. “Doug was an artist at heart with a focus on beauty, environmental awareness and peace,” says Marie. Together, the couple came up with the idea for earthlights and peace candles and other earth awareness products.

At the same time, the couple were part of a group called World Service and with them worked to build The Discovery Wellness Centre and Community in Edmonton. The group brought in speakers and healers to the Centre, which at that time was held at the Planetarium in Coronation Park. There they held workshops, all focused on the this same idea of developing the human potential to create the greatest good in the world.

Aquarian Networks Corp. had always had a renovation component to it. Doug was raised in a family of home builders and contractors, so it was natural for him to combine his artistic abilities with his knowledge of construction. Gradually, the focus of the company shifted more and more to the renovation aspect of the business, morphing into Aquarian Renovations. Throughout the transformation, the company remained true to its core value of developing the human potential, providing staff with many opportunities to learn new skills and home owners with the freedom and flexibility to create the living space of their dreams. “At Aquarian, we invest in people,” explains Marie. “As my favourite author Charles Dickens liked to remind his readers, ‘mankind is our business’.”

Marie says that the best advice she was ever given or could ever give is to invest in yourself. This investment of time, energy and money in the self is part of taking personal ownership for your destiny and it is from this that growth, success and happiness develop. It is only through developing your own potential that you can then help others to develop theirs.

“Developing potential means recognizing the choices, possibilities and learning opportunities that are available and embracing those that create the greatest good for the self and others,” says Marie. “It is about becoming comfortable with the unknown and responding to it not with fear but with a sense of possibility and excitement. Developing the human potential is a holistic approach to life that values integration and connection within the self and with others.”

## Embracing Educational Opportunities

One way to develop your human potential is to embrace every and all educational opportunities which come your way. These may be in the form of formal programs or experiential education. The important

thing is to take every opportunity to learn, grow and develop. Turn failures into successes by learning from the experience. Transform the impossible into the possible by engaging in your own growth and development.

Always one to seek out new adventures and experiences, Marie moved to southern California as a young adult after receiving her Bachelor of Education from the University of Regina and with a few years of teaching under her belt. There, barely into her twenties, she took on a position teaching young people in Compton. A few years later, she returned to Canada to pursue a Masters of Educational Administration from the University of Alberta.

"I had a 33-year career in the education world and truly am a life-long learner," says Marie. "When Doug was diagnosed with cancer, I took a leave from my assistant principal role and became his primary caregiver. As we realized that he was dying, I had to make some hard decisions about our future and took the leap of faith to let go of the work I was doing with Edmonton Public to step into the leadership role of the company."

Marie believes strongly in the development of the human potential through education, and this is something which has influenced the way in which Aquarian Renovations operates as a company. Employees are given every opportunity to learn new skills from one another and are encouraged to express and pursue their ideas. The company has also put many of their journeymen carpenters through NAIT and supports all interested staff to attend the Pursuit of Excellence.

It will come as little surprise to learn that Marie passed on her love of learning to son Levi. "Levi attended the French program at Laurier Heights School for the first nine grades," says Marie. "Then, he continued on in the French education program at Archbishop MacDonald High School and later took his first year of university in French as well at the Faculty St Jean at the University of Alberta. What a gift to be educated in a second language and to expand the awareness and understanding of a greater community. Levi is now in the Bachelor of Commerce program at the University of Alberta and loving it. I am so proud of him!"

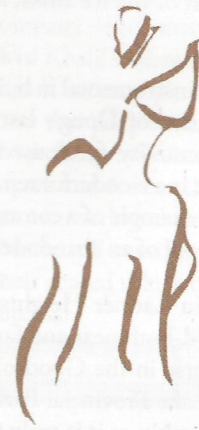
### Community Involvement

One of the goals of developing your potential is to create happiness, both for yourself and for others. Marie describes happiness as what happens when your being and your doing align, when who you are on the inside is what you manifest on the outside.

Since 1996, the Soprovichs have found happiness in Laurier Heights. "We love living in Laurier," says Marie. "The community is solid, and we work together to build a safe and caring environment for our kids, our neighbours and our seniors. They say it takes a village to raise a child...Laurier Heights is that village."

The Soprovichs have come together with their neighbours to build a better community over the years. "We have been very involved with the community over the years in all sorts of capacities," says Marie. "It is wonderful to know so many of our neighbours. Having grown up in a small rural community, the feeling of living here is much like that...we really have a feeling of community. I love it!"

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## Feature Story

"For many years, I have been involved in my community league as president of the Laurier Heights Building Society," explains Marie. "One of my main roles was to fundraise for a new community hall, which we successfully did, actually building the hall in 2015. This was a true community effort." Other projects which the family has been involved with are the development of the ice rinks, tennis courts, water park and playground.

Their company, Aquarian Renovations, was instrumental in building the community gazebo. "The gazebo was one of Doug's last construction projects," says Marie. "The community fundraised, and Aquarian built and finished the structure. It is a wonderful reminder of service to one's community and is a great example of a community coming together to create a beautiful space out of an abandoned lot."

While the Soprovich family loves living in Laurier Heights, they also love to travel to other parts of the world, both near and far. "My family own Northern Meadows Golf Course in the Goodsoil area of Saskatchewan, which is near Meadow Lake Provincial Park," explains Marie. "We love hanging out at our cabin as it is truly family time there....being at the cabin is one of our happy places."

"I also love to travel," continues Marie, "and have adventures on a global scale. A really amazing trip we went on was two winters ago when we travelled to the Austrian Alps. We went back to the village in Tyrol where my dad was born, rented a house and went skiing for a week. It was so amazing. We invited family and friends, filled the house and had one of our best adventures skiing, sharing meal

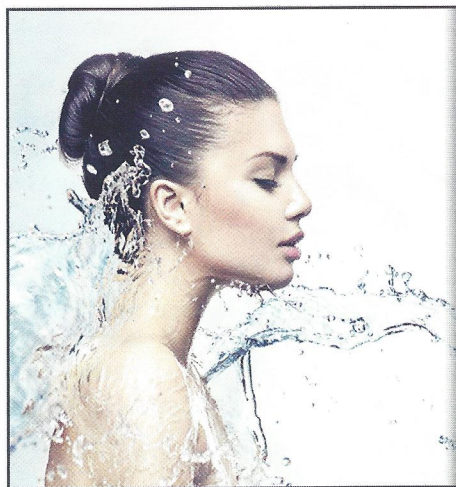
preparation, playing games in the evening and seeing the sights of our family's ancestral homeland. It was one of those bucket list adventures!"

Back home, when Marie and Levi are working or studying, they participate in a variety of hobbies. Levi loves to rock climb, golf, ski and do some gaming. Marie's preferences are for reading, golfing and jogging. "We have a very precious little dog named Ginger," says Marie. "She is a cockapoo, and you can see her jogging with me in the early morning. We both ensure that we stay fit!"

### Choices, Changes and Challenges

Over the course of your life, you will face many choices, changes and challenges. Developing your potential is about realizing that you have choices and uncovering what those choices are. It is about accepting change and channeling it into the best path possible. It is also about understanding that we all encounter challenges, sometimes earth-shatteringly difficult ones which can bring us to our knees, but also knowing that we can and must rise to meet and overcome these challenges rather than sinking beneath the waves of change.

Marie says that she has always been inspired by her grandparents, who left the creature-comforts and culture of Europe for an unknown life in the untamed wilderness of northern Saskatchewan. Their bravery and determination to build a better life and better world have always influenced and guided Marie in her decision-making. "I am amazed at the challenges they were able to overcome," she says.



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In 2011, Marie, Doug and Levi were faced with an challenge of immense proportions: Doug was diagnosed with Stage IV lung cancer. It was treatable but incurable. Death would be the only outcome.

This completely unexpected diagnosis – Doug was a non-smoker who had always valued physical fitness, meditation and healthy eating – shook the Soprovichs' world, forcing them to make many difficult decisions and adapt to quickly changing circumstances. Fortunately, the family were all great communicators determined to find and focus on the positive in life.

Doug wanted to live and die at home, not in a hospital. The family purchased various medical aids, hired a homecare nurse, and Marie took a leave of absence from work to become Doug's primary caregiver in order to make his desire to remain at home possible. Marie says it was the best decision for their family, allowing Levi to spend time with his dad every day, making it easier for friends, family and neighbours to visit, and allowing the couple to discuss the changes that were happening and how best to approach the future. During Doug's illness, the Soprovich family adopted a new motto, one which they still live by: Live this day completely and the future will take care of itself!

As a result of their many talks, Marie made the decision to retire early from her career in education to take over running the family business, Aquarian Renovations. In the year preceding Doug's death in November 2012, the company's staff pulled together to see the company and the founders' family through this tough time of change. With the

help of Doug and later the staff, Marie was able to find the courage and strength to take over the running of the business, finding a way to transfer the strength-based leadership skills and commitment to teamwork from her previous career to her new role at Aquarian.

Since Doug's passing, Marie has thrown herself wholeheartedly into the company which they co-founded 27 years ago, following the wise words of Khalil Gilbran: "Work is love made visible." Aquarian Renovations is an example of creating love through work in many ways - in how two people many years ago sought to make the world a bit better by doing business differently, in how their company treats its employees and fosters their growth, in how it interacts with its customers uncovering their dreams and making them a reality, and in how Marie still manifests and expresses her love for her late husband and their shared values by working to make their company a continued success.



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