

# NEIGHBOURS OF SUNNINGDALE

February 2016



**Meet the Harasym Family**  
Happy Valentine's Day!

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# Meet the Harasym Family

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**Mike and Milena Harasym met on a blind lunch date, at a downtown Casey's restaurant in 1983. The date was arranged by a mutual friend who worked in the Building Division at City Hall. Mike was 25 and working full-time in his family's construction business, after completing his Honours Business Administration at the Ivey Business School, Western. Mike had his career path established: to follow in his father's footsteps as a custom home builder, while Milena worked in Office Administration for the Ministry of Government Services. Although Milena worked in an office setting, her deep passion was to explore her creative and artistic side. She loved to paint and sew; she enjoyed reading books and magazines specific to interior decorating and house designing. While working full-time, Milena took courses at Fanshawe College to hone her skills in these fields of interest.**

As Mike and Milena learned more about each other, they quickly developed their common love for creating new ideas in custom home building. "We just clicked!" says Mike.

Milena adds, "We have been asked many times, how do you manage to work together and stay sane? Well in a nut shell: we get excited about creating a masterpiece. Building is a continuous work in progress. The success of our company, Harasym Developments ([www.harasym.com](http://www.harasym.com)), comes from our love of working with clients and understanding their ideas and needs in making a home THEY are dreaming of."

Together, Mike and Milena have two children: Amanda and Matthew. Mandi, age 28, completed her Master of Public Health in Australia, and she currently works as a consultant in Sydney, for a Holistic Health Clinic. "She is always very busy with new ventures," Milena says. Mandi has created her own holistic cookbook titled, *Zippity Food Da*, and with each sale, she donates a portion to the food bank. She has an extensive education in the field of nutrition and recently completed Stott Pilates instruction.

Mandi is always eager to learn more about health and the benefits of nutrition. She is also an abstract artist and has created colourful works of art on canvas; currently they are showing at Austin and Taylor. ([www.amandaharasym.com](http://www.amandaharasym.com)). She maintains a healthy lifestyle with exercise, her favourite activities being tennis and swimming.

Mike and Milena's son Matthew works for a London-based company, CEM Specialties, as a Technical Specialist. CEM provides measurement systems in the monitoring of air industrial emissions, as well as gases and liquids, to companies around the world including Canada, the United States, Serbia and Jordan. Matthew's favourite hobby is recreational motorcycle racing at Cayuga and Grand Bend Raceways. In his spare time, Matthew also builds computers and weight trains three to four times a week.

During Mike's down time, he reads books, especially historical fiction. His favourite and ultimate relaxation is playing golf with his buddies. The snowy winter months don't stop them from enjoying golf...they meet to play indoor golf. "It keeps us limber and fit, preparing us for the warm spring season," says Mike.

For Milena, time with family and friends is most important. "I feel happiest around people. I love to hear what they have to say. I love to laugh and share stories. I love to keep in touch. Simply put, I am a 'people person.'" Often her work is her stress-reliever. She spends hours designing a home from a woman's perspective, which means practical features and unique finishes. "Clients come to us because they want a customized design, not a cookie cutter plan," she explains. Last year, Milena joined a Pilates group. "It's a great 'time out' for both my body and mind. It's like meditation for me. As I get older, I realize the importance of taking a few minutes for myself to re-energize. In turn, it trickles into a positive approach to my day." Daily walks in the neighbourhood and nearby parks, along with their nine-year-old Yorkie Terrier, Coco, give the couple time to reflect on the day's happenings and upcoming events—a time for future planning and recalling the past.

The family history of both their families is not an unusual one for many of Canada's 1950's immigrants; Mike's parents came from the Ukraine and Milena's from former Yugoslavia. Mike's father, Mike Sr., began his life in Canada as a skilled tailor. His professional life shifted to professional carpentry and home building, with his wife Tatiana by his side. Both put in long hours and together they built up the Harasym name while raising four children: Irene, Aleck, Rose and Mike. Mike Sr. died in 1993 from cancer. Mike's mother continues to live in her home at age 89. She cherishes her memories by looking through the family photo albums and reminiscing about the past.

Milena considers her mother, Juliana, a rare gem. "Mom is always there for our entire family. She loves to bake healthy treats and cooks the best stews." She was raised by farmers in Slovenia until she married at age 17 and moved to Canada to start her new life. Here she cleaned houses and churches to contribute to the household expenses and raised three children: Maria, Milena and George. "Life was not easy back then, but now I am proud of all my children and their successes. It was all worth it," Juliana says. At age 76, and a Valentine baby, she enjoys every minute she can with her family.



The Harasymys have enjoyed family vacation time with destinations that include: west and east coasts of Canada, Florida, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Mexico, and more recently, Scotland, England, and Australia. Much of the travelling is inspired by Mandi who, like her mother, loves to meet new people while learning about life around the world.

Mike and Milena currently live in Meadows of Sunningdale. Previously they resided in Warbler Woods, Highland Woods, Westmount and Byron. "I guess you can say that we have 'the builder bug,'" says Mike. "Moving is part of our lives. It gives us the chance to experience and appreciate the homes we design."

"Along the way we have met so many incredible people. We keep in touch with many and often get together for a games night, or check out the theatre, do a dinner/movie night, or a potluck gathering. We even plan trips together. How great is that!" says Milena, smiling.

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