

# Keeping Ottawa Seniors Connected:

## From Social Isolation to Social Inclusion

**SAY HELLO IN THEIR NATIVE LANGUAGE**

**START GOING TO HAVE COFFEE WITH FRIENDS**

*invite someone for tea*

*Introduce a NEW senior to a group of seniors at the next tea social.*

*Partner with one neighbour to spur a social community in our condo association*

*Ask seniors about their upcoming winter plans*

*Ask questions and listen*

**SMILE :)**

***Smile and greet others***

*Smile and start a conversation with a senior!*

**COMPLIMENT A SENIOR**

*Chat with a stranger in line at the grocery store*

*Keep riding the bus and say HELLO*

**HELP YOUR NEIGHBOUR ANYWAY YOU CAN**

*Make a phone call to a friend*

***Encourage conversation, keep connection going.***

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## Overview

Our vision is an Ottawa where older adults are socially engaged and have opportunities and support services in the community to connect them with others.

Funded by: 

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## Staying Connected

Let us know about initiatives in your community that reduce social isolation and keep seniors connected. Write to us at [kosc@coaottawa.ca](mailto:kosc@coaottawa.ca).



# Keeping Ottawa Seniors Connected **Working Together for Impact**

Over 1.5 million Canadian seniors report feeling lonely. Social researchers are calling it a hidden epidemic that can take its toll on the health of seniors. Loneliness has been associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, depression and anxiety. In fact, this issue is so significant that the UK government has recently appointed a 'Minister for Loneliness'.

Loneliness and social isolation are both of great concern today. While these terms tend to be used interchangeably, it is important to know that they are different. Social isolation is having few friends and contacts. Loneliness, on the other hand, is the feeling of being alone. Based on the 2011 Canadian Community Health Survey, we know that:

- 23% of seniors in Ottawa had limited access someone to listen to them
- 19% had limited access to someone to help with daily chores
- 13% took part in family/friend activities only once per year or never.

Thankfully, research is showing that interventions at the individual and community level can reduce the impact of social isolation among seniors.

The Council on Aging of Ottawa is pleased to be one of seven organizations working together on a city-wide project entitled Keeping Ottawa Seniors Connected. This initiative is funded by the Government of Canada through the New Horizons for Seniors Program. The project partners are working to show the effectiveness of a variety of interventions to reduce barriers for seniors to improve their connection to others. We are specifically focusing on seniors who are living on a low income, have poor official language skills, have a disability, have experienced abuse, or are living in a rural community. Keeping Ottawa Seniors Connected is one of nine such collective projects across Canada – funded to reduce social isolation among seniors.

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**“ The sticky notes on the front cover are suggestions, written by participants at the COA Social Isolation Forum in November 2017, of what we can do individually to connect with seniors in our community. ”**

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In its first year (June 2016 – May 2017), the projects in Ottawa saw 3,046 seniors engaged, 1,212 activities organized, and 988 volunteers involved, of which 743 were seniors and pre-seniors. We continue to evaluate our actions to reduce social isolation among seniors. For a list of projects go to [www.kosc.ca](http://www.kosc.ca).

The articles in this magazine represent stories from these projects, as well as other community partners. They are examples of effective and meaningful ways in which individuals, agencies, and social clubs reach out and connect with seniors. From social / recreational programming, food programs, and information services, to intergenerational programming, they highlight the many ways we create inclusive communities for all ages.

The COA is looking forward to continuing its work in this area through our Social Inclusion Committee. We want to increase the number of seniors who feel connected, supported, and can take part in regular activities. If you are interested in joining our efforts, please contact us at [kosc@coaottawa.ca](mailto:kosc@coaottawa.ca) or **613-789-3577 ext. 103**.



**Helping Seniors Remain  
in the Home they Love!**

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### After the Hospital: Coming Home and Staying Home

The hospital "revolving door" has been named as a major problem for our health care system and can have a negative impact on the well-being of those patients affected. There are steps physicians, patients and family caregivers can take to make it less likely that the patient will need to return. When leaving the hospital, the best chance of a successful recovery is to follow your post-discharge instructions, however, these are a few additional points to keep in mind:

- Patients are discharged sooner than ever and many patients are discharged to a skilled nursing facility or return home while they still need help managing their recovery.
- Successful recovery depends on compliance with discharge instructions, but these can be complex. It's a critical time and support might be needed from family or professionals.
- Patients should discuss an aftercare plan with professionals before leaving the hospital.
- Families may be unable to provide the care their loved one needs; they often feel unprepared or have other responsibilities in life, such as work and family.

Many patients can recover in the comfort of home. Home care can help a successful recovery by:

- Encouraging medication compliance and following up with pharmacists on any side effects.
- Providing supervision and moral support as the patient resumes normal activities.
- Assisting with activities of daily living such as personal care, dressing, bathing, and eating.
- Transporting the patient to outpatient follow-up appointments or other activities.



**Helping Seniors Remain  
in the Home they Love!**

More seniors than ever before are using professional home care to help ensure a successful recovery. Studies show that being in familiar surroundings with proper care in place can provide family members with the peace of mind and can help the patient with a speedy recovery.



# Aging By The Book



registered participants meet for 90 minutes to discuss the week's readings. Trained volunteer co-facilitators (mostly former participants) supply the readings, which are chosen to offer a variety of perspectives on issues relevant for older adults, including the shift into new roles and identities, the impact of physical, cognitive and emotional changes, and new ways to engage with life. Applying the insights of authors to their own lives, participants consider the experience of being an older adult—here and elsewhere, now and in the past.

Throughout 2017, with support from the Community Fund for Canada's 150<sup>th</sup>, ABTB was offered at three OPL branch libraries and two retirement residences. Additionally, the grant supported the preparation of materials and training for new volunteer facilitators. New sessions of ABTB will be offered going forward.

For more information on the program, including its history and useful resources, visit [www.agingbythebook.ca](http://www.agingbythebook.ca).

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**Wendy Robbins, co-founder with Trudy Medcalf of Aging by the Book: A Reading Circle**

Have you ever signed up for a program that you enjoyed so much you wished it could last forever? Last spring, participants in Aging by the Book (ABTB) at the Ottawa Public Library (OPL) Main Branch felt exactly that way. So they took matters into their own hands at the end of the original six-week program and continued to meet. This illustrates just how much participants value this program, which has been

offered at OPL since 2012. Past participants describe it as thought-provoking and positive, providing a rare opportunity to explore the inner experience of aging.

So what exactly is Aging by the Book? It is a discussion group for people who are intrigued by the idea of using poetry, fiction, memoir and other writing to explore aging. The "reading circle" format provides a safe and respectful environment to have conversations about attitudes, stereotypes, challenges and opportunities of aging. For six weeks, a group of up to ten



From Social Isolation to Social Inclusion

# An Ageless Bicycle

**Gary Bradshaw, founder of  
Cycling Without Age, Ottawa  
Chapter**

“Thank you for allowing me to feel free again.” These are the touching words of a 92-year-old man who had returned to his seniors home after a thirty-minute ride on a two-passenger, red, three-wheel bicycle. Cycling Without Age is a program that aims to socially include all seniors, using guiding principles like: Storytelling, Relationships and Without Age.



## Powered by Man, Driven by the Need to Socially Include all Seniors



The program allows seniors to develop relationships with people outside of their residence, an important pillar in the development of their overall well-being. The program enables both the driver (pilot) of the bike and the senior(s) to continuously engage with one another by listening, telling and/or sharing interesting stories. Both parties begin to develop a friendship from the moment the trishaw takes off.

Cycling Without Age allows seniors to feel like they belong, that they are valued and that they are a significant part of our community. The three-wheeler, with its motto “The Right to Wind in Your Hair,” allows seniors to be immersed in all that our lively city has to offer. Whether it be bird watching on the trails along the Ottawa River in the spring or attending a community barbecue on a hot summer day, the program enables seniors to be more active participants in our community.

**“I cannot see, but  
I know that I am  
somewhere among  
the trees.”**

Please visit [www.cyclingwithoutage.ca](http://www.cyclingwithoutage.ca) for more information on the program, including how you can become a three-wheel bicycle pilot.



# Community Helpers Making A **Positive Difference** in the Lives of Older Adults

**Megan Richards, Community Health Program, Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre**

With funding from the Government of Canada through the New Horizons for Seniors Program, the Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre (WOCRC) developed the Community Helpers project as part of the Keeping Ottawa Seniors Connected (KOSC) Collective Impact Project. Recognizing that organizations alone cannot meet the needs of our growing older adult population, this project is designed to create compassionate communities where, every day, community members are prepared and empowered to support their senior neighbours, friends and family members.

Social isolation among older adults is a growing issue. Studies show that those who experience isolation are more likely to experience poorer physical and mental health, show a faster cognitive decline,

visit Emergency Departments more often, and be admitted to long-term care sooner. The need for supportive communities is evident, and this project is one piece of a complex solution.

Using the expertise of Algonquin College, WOCRC developed a training program that focuses on imparting knowledge and tools to support older adults with the challenges they face. The training covers the following nine areas: healthy aging, fall prevention, mental health, social isolation, life transitions, caregiver support, diversity and aging, elder abuse, and community resources. Community Helpers are trained to combat social isolation, and link older adults to other services, programs and supports. They are encouraged not to provide sole support, but rather to develop care teams, involving friends, neighbours and family members. This approach ultimately provides greater support to both the senior and caregivers.



To date, over 200 community members have been trained, including volunteers, members of faith groups, caregivers/family members and seniors themselves. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Additionally, 27 staff at 13 organizations across the greater Ottawa area attended train-the-trainer workshops and can now deliver the training within their own communities. As the project continues to grow, more older adults will receive support, and our communities can continue to play an active role in combatting isolation.

For more information, please contact the Community Health Program at WOCRC at [richards@wocrc.ca](mailto:richards@wocrc.ca) or **613-591-3686, ext. 324.**



From Social Isolation to Social Inclusion

# Elder Abuse Response & Referral Service

**Kim McDonald, EARRS Case Manager, Nepean, Rideau Osgoode Community Resource Centre**

**F**or over 10 years, the Elder Abuse Response & Referral Service (EARRS), a city-wide service, has worked out of the Nepean, Rideau and Osgoode Community Resource Centre (NROCRC). **EARRS offers intake, information, consultation, referrals, and support to seniors at risk or who are in an abusive situation.**

EARRS has two full time staff: an Intake Worker and a Case Manager. The Intake Worker receives calls from people with concerns of suspected abuse of an older person. Calls mostly come from concerned family, friends, or service providers in the community, but occasionally a senior gathers up enough courage to reach out for help. In many cases, the Intake Worker can offer enough support to help clients

manage a challenging and potentially abusive situation. However, some situations are very complex and need more intensive support. When needed, the Case Manager offers direct support to the client and can assist caregivers or service providers when warranted.

Our service approach fits well with Keeping Ottawa Seniors Connected (KOSC)'s focus on reducing social isolation. Using a client-centred approach, EARRS works collaboratively with clients and caregivers to help build empowering support networks that help them regain some control in their lives.

We also offer education and awareness sessions to seniors' groups and community service providers. During these sessions, people learn:

- How to recognize elder abuse
- What they can do to help
- What resources are available in the community

Our intent is to offer hope that positive change is possible when seniors reach out for help or offer help to others. By helping people to connect socially, the KOSC projects are guiding our more vulnerable seniors to improve their quality of life. They may even prevent tragedies.

For more information about EARRS, or to book an information session for your group, contact us at **613-596-5626** or visit **[www.nrocrc.org/services/seniors/elder-abuse](http://www.nrocrc.org/services/seniors/elder-abuse)**.





# ElderDog Canada:

## Helping Seniors and Their Canine Companions

***Ardra Cole, Founder and Chair,  
ElderDog Canada***

For many seniors, physical, mental and social health and well-being are linked to the presence of a beloved canine companion. And yet, a variety of challenges can make it difficult for seniors to adequately care for their dogs, particularly in harsh winter conditions, or during periods of illness.

When the phone rings at ElderDog Canada, the caller could be a social worker, health care professional, concerned neighbour, vet, or a senior. Regardless of circumstance, the underlying reason for the call is that a senior—living alone and without family or any other kind of support

system— needs help and has nowhere else to turn. Mr. Lebrun was rushed to hospital and old Bijou is at home alone with no one to provide care. Mrs. Smyth needs knee surgery but is considering cancelling the appointment if she can't find someone to care for her beloved Buster. Due to the slippery sidewalks, Mme. Goulet has not been able to get out walking with her dog. Mr. Grant recently lost his beloved Max and would dearly love a new companion. For these and other Ottawa senior citizens, ElderDog is a lifeline.

ElderDog Canada is a national non-profit and charity, dedicated to supporting the vital connection between seniors and their dogs. Dogs provide reliable companionship for well seniors and those

who are less active. They enhance their quality of life. This is especially true for those who feel lonely and isolated - a significant problem in our aging population. Animals help older people gain a renewed sense of purpose and an increased sense of self-worth, as well as a stronger sense of independence. Dogs also are noted for their capacity to enhance social engagement and interaction.

ElderDog Canada is headquartered in Nova Scotia with chapters (Pawds) in six provinces to date, including a very active Pawd in Ottawa. ElderDog is 100% volunteer-run and there are no fees for any services. For more information, visit [www.elderdog.ca](http://www.elderdog.ca) or contact us at **1-855-336-4226** or [info@elderdog.ca](mailto:info@elderdog.ca).



Public libraries help to enrich communities in a myriad of ways. We provide communities with public spaces and experiences and with a wide array of programs and services to meet the needs of a diverse and intergenerational clientele. When libraries take advantage of this unique intergenerational setting, the benefits are endless and flow both ways.

When older adults have an opportunity to engage and socialize with younger people in the community, issues of social isolation are addressed. At the same time, young adults involved in intergenerational programs develop communication skills, problem-solving abilities and a positive attitude towards aging.

One of the first inter-generational programs that OPL hosted is the ever-popular Techno Buddies. Through one-on-one tutoring, teen volunteers work with older adults to help them navigate technology and social media applications. The goal is to empower older adults to approach new technologies with confidence and skill, while

also providing meaningful volunteer opportunities for teens.

We are planning to bring Techno Buddies to venues like community centres and senior residences. This will help us reach those older adults who may not be inclined or able to get to a library branch.

residence in close proximity to the library branch. Sessions often include young children reading to older adults and OPL librarians reading to the group as a whole. This type of interactive programming also helps to ease the isolation that is often felt by the older generation.

## Ottawa Public Library's Intergenerational Programs



Another program that has taken place at OPL is intergenerational storytimes. These storytimes bring generations and groups together around a common text. They provide a great way for generations to interact through music, movement and books. To make travel easier for older adults, especially during the winter months, librarians and teachers have coordinated with an older adult

Offering opportunities for children, teens and older adults to collaborate gives each generation a chance to learn from the others. Whether it's tangible life skills or the value of compassion and community, the library can be the perfect space to grow these relationships.

For more information about Techno Buddies, go to [www.bibliottawalibrary.ca](http://www.bibliottawalibrary.ca) or call **613-580-2940**.



# Good Food and Friendships at The Table



**Ramsey Hart, Executive Director, The Table Community Food Centre, Perth**

“ I am a senior living in Perth. I have a wonderful and loving family that are available to me as much as possible. But they are all busy with their individual families and jobs.” This is how Sharon introduced herself in a letter to The Table Community Food Centre.

Many seniors can relate to Sharon’s feeling of isolation. Sharon’s letter continues... “I walked by The Table many times but I was unsure if I should come in.... meals can

be very lonely, always eating alone....so one day I got the courage to come in.” Since that first visit, Sharon has become a regular and has found a lively second home.

The Table is part of a growing network of Community Food Centres where food is the starting point, but breaking down social barriers and creating more engaged and supportive communities are equally important outcomes. To support local seniors in Perth, The Table has introduced seniors-specific programming. We have provided special seniors hours in our food bank and stretched beyond our food-focused programming, to include a gentle-fit class in partnership with a local physiotherapy clinic. Importantly, while seniors appreciate the programs specific to them, they also tell us how much they love being part of programs with a diverse age range, like our community meals, the community garden, and various cooking programs.

All programs at The Table are offered free of charge to ensure economic accessibility, an important aspect for many seniors living on fixed incomes. Involving a diversity of people reduces the stigma associated with accessing the programs and services, which can be particularly acute in a small town where there is no anonymity.

The Table is able to offer a wide range of programs thanks to 120 volunteers who work with staff. Many of the volunteers are also program participants, and about half are seniors. In recent surveys of our volunteers and participants, 100% reported a sense of belonging at The Table. This success is due to the active and engaging nature of our programs, and perhaps most importantly, the welcoming, inclusive and non-judgmental atmosphere we carefully create at the Centre.

For more information about The Table, visit us online at [www.thetablecfc.org](http://www.thetablecfc.org), call **613-267-6428, ext. 8** or email [info@thetablecfc.org](mailto:info@thetablecfc.org). For more about the Community Food Centres across Canada and the good food movement visit [www.cfccanada.ca](http://www.cfccanada.ca).



# The Square Dance Family

**Wendy VanderMeulen, Caller/  
Teacher, Modern Square Dancing**

If you are looking for something to do to get out of the house, modern square dancing is the thing to do. And don't think you can't do it. Sixty-five percent of people who start square dancing are 50 or older. This tells us that people look for something to do once the kids are out of the house and, for some, once they've retired from the workforce.

I like to tell my dancers that there are three major benefits to square dancing: it's good for you socially (you do it in groups of eight and work together to make the dance succeed); it's good for you mentally (you have to pay attention and process instructions instantaneously); and it's good for you physically (you're moving!).

But the thing that most people like best about square dancing is the camaraderie. Ask any square dancer and they will

refer to their circle of dance friends as their "square dance family."

Here are comments from some Ottawa-area dancers who are happy to share how square dancing has become such an important part of their senior lifestyle:

**1** The first year we danced, I was diagnosed with cancer and had 10 months of treatments. Our square dance family provided us with much more support than groups we had belonged to for many years.

**2** The square dance club we belong to is very social. Over the years, dancer friends have become friends outside of square dancing.



**3** [When] we moved to Ottawa ... we didn't know a soul and felt that square dancing might be a good way to meet people. We sure were right. We now know people from all over Eastern Ontario!

**4** Besides friendship, square dancing provides us with both mental and physical exercise. We are not an outgoing couple, so if it were not for square dancing, I don't know how we would survive as a member of society. Square dancing in our senior years means life.

Maybe modern square dancing is for you?

For more information on Square Dancing, go to [www.wendyandjohn.ca](http://www.wendyandjohn.ca).



## A Place Where Grown-Ups Come to Make New Friends

We all get lonely from time to time; feeling isolated from other people or disconnected from those around us. And while feelings of loneliness are nothing new, research suggests it is becoming more prevalent and the health impacts can be quite serious, especially for those aged 50 plus.



While loneliness can lead to problems with both your physical and mental health, loneliness in itself is not a disease or a fact, it is a feeling. And one that can be overcome. A new online community and social app called Amintro is helping those 50 years and up to find purpose and reignite their lives. Their motto is “Make Friends. Live Life.” and that is exactly what they help seniors do. Amintro is not a dating site. “What we provide is a safe environment for mature adults to build a private online profile that reflects who they are as a friend, and what they consider important characteristics in friends, based on personal experiences, likes and dislikes”, says Amintro Founder, Charlene Nadalin. Once you connect online, you can head out to explore your community, join activities, start a club, and live life to its fullest. Membership is free. Take a look and sign up at [www.amintro.com](http://www.amintro.com).



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From Social Isolation to Social Inclusion

# Supporting Inclusive Aging in the City of Ottawa

While 89% of seniors in Ottawa reported being satisfied with their lives, research reveals that some groups, such as senior women, LGBTQ+ seniors, Indigenous seniors, ethno-cultural or newcomer seniors and seniors with disabilities, are more vulnerable to poor outcomes. <sup>(1, 2)</sup> Ottawa's population is aging and the senior population is diverse, with almost 35% born in another country. <sup>(2)</sup>

**The City of Ottawa is responding to these changes, taking steps to make Ottawa a more age-friendly city and improving outcomes for seniors at risk of exclusion.**

## Equity and Inclusion Lens

Developed in 2008, in a partnership between the City

of Ottawa and the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), the **Equity and Inclusion Lens** (EI Lens) is a tool for advancing equity and inclusion in the City of Ottawa. An extensive, collaborative process with over 150 community members and city staff was undertaken to develop a Handbook and 11 Diversity Snapshots, one of



them the Older Adults Snapshot, which identified challenges that specific populations encounter, as well as assets that they bring to the community. A new version of the Handbook and Snapshots was launched in 2015. More than 2,000 staff have received the EI Lens training since 2011.

## Older Adult Plan

In October 2015, the City of Ottawa adopted a second **Older Adult Plan** for the 2015 to 2018 period. The purpose of the Plan is to make Ottawa age-friendlier by improving municipal government infrastructure, programs and services for older adults. The Plan includes 51 actions that will be completed by the end of 2018. A budget of \$500,000 is invested annually in projects supporting these actions.

It is the City's hope that, through these and other initiatives being implemented by several community partners, outcomes will improve for all seniors.

## Sources

<sup>(1)</sup> **United Way Ottawa** (2017). *A Profile of Vulnerable Seniors in the Ottawa Region*. [www.unitedwayottawa.ca/Seniors](http://www.unitedwayottawa.ca/Seniors)

<sup>(2)</sup> **The Council on Aging of Ottawa** (2017). *How Age-Friendly is Ottawa?: An Evaluation Framework to Measure the Age-Friendliness of Ottawa*. [www.coaottawa.ca/afo](http://www.coaottawa.ca/afo)



# Help is a **Three-Digit** Phone Call Away

## “211. How may I help you?”

This is something we say hundreds of times a day. Our job is to connect Ontario residents to the social, health and governmental services they need. As a rule, we don't know the names of the callers. But sometimes they call us back to say thank you.

Oscar said he needed money to install a ramp to access his home. A blind and wheelchair-bound gentleman, he was living alone since the death of his wife. The 211 agent mentioned the Ontario Renovates Program and the Assistive Devices Program. Oscar had no idea these supports even existed! He applied to both programs right away. Thanks to the renovation, he would be able to remain in his home.

Agnes needed dialysis treatments, but had no way to get to the Ottawa Hospital. A taxi would have been too



**When you don't know  
where to turn.™**

expensive. When she told her doctor, he suggested she call 211. The 211 agent told her about the Transportation Collaborative in her area—something the caller had never heard about. To her great delight, she could afford the program's reduced rates and immediately reserved a spot for her upcoming appointments.

Esther called about her knitting group. They had handmade mittens, scarves and socks to donate, but nobody to give them to. Some members were wondering if they should continue to meet, but it was the only social activity for most of them! The 211 agent suggested donations to the Salvation Army Family Program, as well as the youth



homeless shelter. Esther said she was relieved. To make a difference in the life of others, even a small one, is such a great feeling!

Like Oscar, Agnes and Esther, you may experience moments when you feel alone and don't know where to turn. Why not pick up the phone and dial 2-1-1? The service is free, confidential and offered day and night, every day. Rest assured: it's a real person who will answer: **“211. How may I help you?”**



From Social Isolation to Social Inclusion

# Seniors' Centre



# Without Walls



**Rachel Sutcliffe, Coordinator,  
The Good Companions**

For three years, The Good Companions' Seniors' Centre Without Walls program in Ottawa has provided isolated seniors and adults with physical disabilities a place to meet, learn, build friendships, and find support—all from the comfort of home. Seniors' Centre Without Walls is a community outreach initiative that offers free programs and activities through multi-person phone conversations for those who may find it difficult to leave home for extended periods of time. The program provides an opportunity to socialize, obtain health-related information from professionals and volunteers in the community, and discuss a variety of topics. Ultimately the program is designed to reduce isolation and loneliness and improve the mental health of seniors.

Similar to attending a recreational centre in person, participants are provided

with a calendar of programs and activities for which they can register. There are phone sessions (30-60 minutes long) running every day, Monday through Friday between 9:00 am and 4:00 pm. Each phone session, hosted by a facilitator, has between 8-12 participants who have the opportunity to speak to and engage with one another.

**"I was spending my time very much alone, very depressed and felt I didn't fit in, didn't belong anywhere. Then things changed. I was introduced to the Seniors' Centre Without Walls... sure enough it was my ticket out of a life unlived."**

The Good Companions have also partnered with Centre de service Guigues to provide similar programming to the Francophone community.

As well, a new partnership is forming with Barry's Bay & Area Support and Home Services to expand into the rural communities.

The wonderful thing about Seniors' Centre Without Walls is that participants come from all across the city, and from many different backgrounds. Some are younger seniors, some are in their 90s, some of them have travelled the world, and some have never left Ontario. No matter where they come from, the one binding factor is the longing for community, friendship and the opportunity to learn.

For more information about the program, please contact the Seniors' Centre Without Walls Coordinator at The Good Companions at **613-236-0428 ext. 2323**, **scww@thegoodcompanions.ca**, **www.thegoodcompanions.ca**. Contact Barry's Bay at **613-756-2772** or **jking@bbahs.org**.



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**Sharon Coward, Senior Manager, In-Home Services, Ottawa West Community Support**

Sometimes communities need a reason to come out and socialize. In the 11 Ottawa Community Housing low-income senior buildings supported by the Aging In Place program of Ottawa West Community Support, most residents live alone and many struggle with language barriers. Since 2008, Aging In Place has provided much-needed outreach and support services to residents on-site at these locations. However, program staff and tenants remained concerned about the level of social isolation observed among some residents. Since 2016, with the help of the Government of Canada through the New Horizons for Seniors Program, Ottawa West Community Support has been able to work with residents, volunteers and community leaders to make serious inroads in combating isolation through the Healthy Connections; Healthy Communities (HCHC) program.

At the heart of the HCHC program is the fundamental belief that friendships and

# Healthy Connections: Supporting Seniors to **Stay Healthy and Connected**

community awareness can be built with and around barriers like language, culture or physical disability, through shared experiences and shared needs. With the help of over 400 community volunteers, HCHC brings individuals together through food programs, social events, exercise and community education. All residents are welcome, and programs encourage activities that can be done with or without language! Through on-site activities like yoga, line dancing, food chops, community cooking, games and crafts, residents have a chance to participate, organize events and reach out to their neighbours. Community members share recipes, laugh together, try international foods and learn new dance steps. Participants sit together to think about community dynamics, supporting one another and looking out for each other's needs.



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**“This new program is a great way to meet my neighbours and develop connections and friendships. If it hadn't been for the new HCHC program, I probably would never have talked to my new friends.”**

– tenant participant

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For more information on the program, contact us at **613-728-6016** or [www.owcs.ca/aging-in-place](http://www.owcs.ca/aging-in-place).



# 孫萍女士

**A Story for the "Tell Your Story, Share Your Life" Project of the Kanata Chinese Seniors Support Centre**

**我**2006年剛來加拿大時，和女兒一家住在Bayshore，那時參加過一些社區活動。2007年我們搬到Kanata來，天天待在家裡人都悶出病來，那時一直找不到地方活動，後來我天天找組織，就希望有地方能活動活動。

When I first came to Canada in 2006, I lived with my daughter's family in Bayshore and took part in some community activities. In 2007, we moved to Kanata. I stayed at home looking after the kids all day long and felt very tired and bored. I was looking for a community centre so that I could take part in some local activities.

2009年，我在圖書館又碰到當年在Bayshore认识的社區工作員文祯，正在圖書館開辦活動，當時好興奮又遇故知。2010年時，有人打電話給我說，社區里的小房子開始有活動了，我好高興，但是因為當時外孫女還小，我還幫忙別人帶孩子，很忙；因此無法參加活動。後來，覺得自己越來越沒自信時，正好有一個機會參加協助義賣活動，第一次就為老年社交俱樂部籌募到200元，當時很高興自己還有這個能力幫助他

堅持身心健康的美丽舞者说故事，  
分享人生故事報導系列



## Ms. Sun Ping

### A Beautiful Dancer Who Stays Healthy Both Physically and Spiritually

人，從此生活開始找到了方向。從移民後每天心悶發慌，胖到2尺8寸腰，到找到了社區活動中心，我開始協助社區做義工工作，成立舞蹈隊，參加老年人互助小組，進行家庭食譜交流，友善訪問老人院，我找到了生活第二春的感覺，我慢慢安心了，從此不再需要吃降壓藥。

In 2009, I met Wenzhen, a community worker and joined her for an activity she was hosting in the library. In 2010,

someone called me and said that some activities had started in the small stone house in the community. I was very glad to hear the news, but I could not go because my granddaughter was still too young, and I had to help look after some other children. My confidence continued to decrease. Then, one day, I had a chance to take part in a rummage sale. I helped to raise \$200 for a social club for the elderly. I was very



happy that I had the ability to help others! Since then, I have gained self-confidence and found a direction for my life.

After I immigrated to Canada, I started to get fat. I was in bad shape and felt sad. The community activities helped to improve my health. After I became a community volunteer, I set up a dancing team with a group of seniors. I joined in mutual aid groups for the elderly, I shared family recipes with other seniors and learned new cooking skills. I paid visits to nursing homes, comforting seniors and bringing them love and understanding. From all of this, I found a new life. I no longer needed to take antihypertensive medication.

在國內我是從事工業衛生管理，根本不會舞蹈。可是來到加拿大後，為了保持健康，我堅持做一個內外都“美麗”的舞者。讓自己身心都健康絕對不是一個口號而已，要身體力行才能達到目的。當你認真的時候，那個愛的力量是會感染的，相互影響的。無心插柳柳成蔭。回顧往昔新年活動的照片，一一紀錄了孫子們參與的身影，也紀錄了他們的成長。我們現在陪伴孫子們長大，讓孫子們將來陪伴我們老去。

In China, I was engaged in industrial hygiene management and could not dance at all. But after I came to Canada, to stay healthy, I decided to dance. I insisted on becoming a “beautiful” dancer from both the appearance and the heart. You should do

your best to achieve your goal. When you are serious about doing something, your love is contagious and powerful. I often look at the photos of New Year’s activities from the past. They record our grandchildren’s growth; they grew up with our company, and we will have their company when we are old.

為了堅持對舞蹈的訓練，我從忙碌的生活中，點滴抽出時間來組織大家排練，但不是每個人都能理解對舞蹈的執著，因此難免總有人我是非，再加上親人離世，種種的打擊難免也會讓我消極。但人生不如意事十之八九，生活總有不順暢的時候，與其終日煩惱不堪，倒不如為社區多做些事，別人快樂，自己也開心。



To keep up with dance training, I took time out from my busy life to organize some training activities and rehearsals. I worked hard. However, I faced some obstacles. Not everyone understood my dedication to dancing and I had to face my mother’s death. I felt very low for quite a long while. Life is not always as good as we wish it to be. When life is not smooth, it

is better to do more things for the community rather than feel sad and bitter. I believe that when you make others happy, you make yourself happy at the same time.

讀者感言：

朱珍乙：听了孙萍的故事，感到她的坚强的毅力，不畏困难，追求美好的乐观精神，给大家带来了年轻，带来了快乐。谢谢。

讀者 1：孫萍對孫子的期望：“我現在陪你長大，將來妳陪我變老”，真好！

讀者 2：我很同意孙萍说的：善

的循環，愛的感染，大家互相配合，帶給社區一些快樂。

張兵說：孫萍她能影響很多朋友，讓大家跟著她走。

讀者 3：分享孫萍一席談，才知道原來在堅持的背後有更多的付出，才能繼續堅持下去！孫萍平鋪直敘的故事讓人淚溼衣襟。

[www.kcsc.org/#/News\\_Events/Videos](http://www.kcsc.org/#/News_Events/Videos)

**Is someone you know becoming invisible?**

The Spectrum Risk Factor Tool is available for download at [www.coaottawa.ca/committees/social-inclusion](http://www.coaottawa.ca/committees/social-inclusion).

The tool is available in English, French, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, Vietnamese, and Chinese.

## REACH OUT AND CONNECT WITH AN OLDER PERSON

Social isolation and loneliness are major social, health and quality of life issues for older people. Many seniors are isolated and rely only on a pet or TV for companionship. Over time, their mental and physical health deteriorate, sometimes to the point where they become “invisible” – we only learn about their existence when they reach the hospital. But it doesn’t have to be that way... The goal of this tool is to help you identify the risks... and the possible actions to take. **DEPENDING ON THE RISK FACTORS, MAYBE ONLY A FEW, THE SENIOR COULD BE AT THE SERIOUS OR IMMEDIATE INTERVENTION STAGE.**

### RISK FACTORS | INDICATORS OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

Personal	Health	Living situation	Changes in...	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>age = 80+</li> <li>childless</li> <li>member of a specific group</li> <li>older newcomer</li> <li>lower levels of education</li> <li>death of a partner</li> <li>poor English language skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>chronic illness/disability</li> <li>depression or other mental health issues</li> <li>loss of vision, hearing</li> <li>dementia</li> <li>age-related disabilities</li> <li>mobility problems</li> <li>alcoholism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>low/unstable income</li> <li>being a caregiver</li> <li>no friends or family nearby</li> <li>being anonymous to neighbours</li> <li>minimal participation in social activities, volunteering, outside groups (church, club)</li> <li>living alone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>physical health (bruising, weight loss, weakness)</li> <li>mental/emotional health (fear, confusion)</li> <li>personal hygiene/appearance</li> <li>personality/routine</li> <li>appearance of home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lack of affordable, accessible transportation</li> <li>loss of driver’s licence</li> <li>lack of awareness/access to community services</li> <li>challenges re. technology</li> <li>limited assistance with routine activities</li> </ul>

**PERSON HAS 3+ RISK FACTORS**

**1 POTENTIAL RISK**

**PERSON HAS 5+ RISK FACTORS**

**2 MODERATE RISK**

**PERSON HAS 7+ RISK FACTORS**

**3 SERIOUS RISK**

**PERSON HAS 10+ RISK FACTORS**

**4 IMMEDIATE ACTION REQUIRED**

### POTENTIAL ACTIONS:

- Regular phone calls to check-in
- Contact individual’s family
- Set up visitation schedule with friends/family
- Offer to take person shopping
- Offer lift to medical/other appointments
- Invite to meet for coffee or other outing (e.g. library, church)

### FOR INFORMATION:

- Call 211, a source of information on government and community based health and social services.
- Contact your participating RISE organization.



**The Council on Aging of Ottawa**  
**Le Conseil sur le vieillissement d'Ottawa**

**coaottawa.ca**  
**613-789-3577**

**Disclaimer:** These are guidelines only, if you feel that the senior is at the point of serious risk or needs immediate intervention, even though they are experiencing only one or two of the risk factors, please take action.

**info@rise-clsa.ca**  
**1-800-648-1111**



# Collaborative Partners



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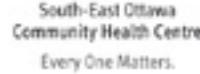
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