



# Community Links

Ageing Well Together

Fall 2015



## What is a safe, healthy community . . . . 3

Seniors asked for their opinions in a Pictou County study



## Is loneliness on the rise? . . . . 4

Research shows we need to take social relationships seriously



## Simple steps to age-friendly communities . . . 5

Changes at the grass roots level may be as simple as a bench.



## Prevent winter falls: Go shopping! . . . 6

Follow our handy guide of fall-prevention Christmas gifts.

## Community Links

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# Sustaining Rural Communities in a spirit of giving

**E**LIZABETH ASPIN of West Branch, Pictou County, illustrates a perfect example of community development at its very roots. Elizabeth is a retired spiritual leader who was born during the depression and grew up on a farm in a family with 16 children. Elizabeth's native Canadian mother instilled in her children a respect for the land and a tendency to listen to the 'still small voice' which can be heard through meditation and trust in one's instincts.

Elizabeth's recent efforts in the community started with a conversation with Rev. Christine Johnson at the local United Church. They shared a



Elizabeth Aspin, left, and Christine Johnson go over plans for a community lunch. (Rosalie MacEachern photo)

concern that some area seniors were facing a "heat or eat" dilemma, where limited budgets force a choice between keeping warm and having enough nutritious food. This conversation started a monthly lunch program with sandwiches supplemented by Elizabeth's homemade soup and supported by the United Church Women. Since she raises free range chickens, three of Elizabeth's chickens found their way into the next lunch and learn session for 20 area seniors. This then led to the idea of cooperative food buying, where in cooperation with a local store, flour was bought in bulk and sold at a very reasonable price to the seniors.

At this point, Mary MacLellan from Pictou County Seniors Outreach managed to provide Elizabeth with \$400 seed money to aid in the continuation of the lunch and learn program. With these

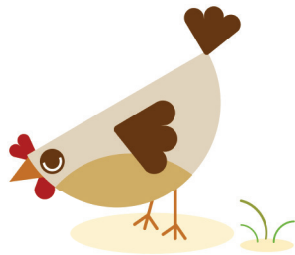
See page 2

## Elizabeth Aspin

*From page 1*

funds, Elizabeth literally bought seeds and 46 chickens, which she raised on an 'at cost' basis and then sold the meat at a very reasonable \$2.00/lb to area seniors.


From here, the West Branch program has expanded to include a clothing exchange, the sharing of garden



**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”**

produce, learning sessions on how to grow sprouts, cook with beans for low cost nutrition, and a popular session on making sauerkraut. Four area churches are now involved, and the monthly lunches centre around foods of the different provinces, starting with 'fish and brewis' from Newfoundland, Elizabeth's native province. Elizabeth and friends negotiated a four per cent discount on heating oil for area seniors, and have found an affordable provider of cord wood. Proceeds of the various activities have started a fuel fund to help get people through the winter season.

Elizabeth is not one to shirk a challenge. For next spring, she has plans for raised bed gardening for those in wheelchairs. An influx of "Woofers (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) will provide the people power on Elizabeth's hobby farm. Seeds are already being prepared in pots decorated by the seniors. Elizabeth points out that all of these activities are the result of building trust, using the right words, sharing skills and creating an environment for mutual learning. Elizabeth and her community partners are a perfect example of the famous quote by anthropologist Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."



### Year of Ageing Well 2016

Once again our Year of Ageing Well Calendar is now being distributed around the Province. Thank you to everyone who submitted photographs. We received so many great examples of Nova Scotian seniors enjoying life to the full. We have already started planning for the 2017 edition, and our photo contest is now year round!

Congratulation to this year's photo winners:

- 1st Prize: Jamie O'Haire
- 2nd Prize: J. Lynn Simms
- 3rd Prize: Jim Austin

## A reason to smile

The Nova Scotia Federation of Seniors has entered into an agreement with a Health Insurance provider for seniors, 55 years and older, living in Nova Scotia, who would like to participate in a Dental Plan. There isn't any exam, only an application to get one started. The only prerequisite is being a member of an affiliated senior's club or an independent member of the Federation.



*For additional information please contact Bernie LaRusic, phone 902-562-1902 or e-mail: bernielarusic\_392@hotmail.com*

# What is your vision of a safe and healthy community?



**T**HAT'S THE QUESTION Pictou County seniors are being asked as data is gathered to inform social isolation research being conducted.

Ten communities held "Let's Talk" sessions using World Café facilitation techniques. Communities included Pictou Landing First Nation, Lismore, Caribou River, River John, Bridgeville and West Branch. Also, women from the Second United Baptist Church in New Glasgow organized a session as did health care professionals with the Nova Scotia Health Authority. Funding has been provided by community health boards and Community Links.

To date, common themes include doing for ourselves, being neighbourly, less reliance on government to solve our problems, looking for community solutions. Also, there is a need for seniors

to ask for and advocate for what they want, raising their expectations and their self-esteem. Navigation of existing programs and services is a concern for some seniors, as is having the resources (literacy, income) to access those programs and services. Also, concern has been expressed about how age-friendly our communities really are. For example, snow removal equipment refilling previously shovelled driveways.

Marram Consulting who have been contracted to do the research and prepare the final report, expect to have that ready in January. Already, a couple of initiatives have begun as a result of the sessions. In Bridgeville, for example, community volunteers have started a Meals on Wheels program for homebound seniors.

*Partners for this project are Pictou County Seniors Outreach, Community Links, and the Pictou County Municipalities Crime Prevention Association.*

## Senior Volunteers - Strengthening Our Communities

A recent Report from the Community Foundation of Nova Scotia called *Vital Signs: Nova Scotia's Social Sector 2015* found that there are more than 6200 active non-profit organizations in Nova Scotia. Although these organizations employ 7% of Nova Scotia's paid workforce, their work could not be accomplished

without the thousands of volunteers who give their time, expertise and passion to make our communities stronger. Many of these volunteers are seniors. In fact, Vital Signs report tells us that "in 2010 Nova Scotia seniors (65+) contributed the second highest average

**"Seniors 65 and older are playing a lead role in maintaining the vibrancy and viability of many of our rural communities"**

number of volunteer hours from among seniors in Canada – an average annual contribution of 233 hours." The report goes on to say that "seniors 65 and older are playing a lead role in maintaining the vibrancy and viability of many of our rural communities . They are likely to act locally, in what they perceive and identify as their own community."

*To find out more about the Vital Signs Report. Go to <http://cfns-fcne.ca/en/vital-signs/>*

*To look for a volunteer position, or to post a volunteer opportunity, go to [www.goodns.ca](http://www.goodns.ca)*



# Is loneliness on the rise?



**T**HE HOLIDAY SEASON and the coming of winter can highlight the fact that some members of our communities, including seniors, are living in isolation, and isolation can often lead to feelings of loneliness. Choosing to live in isolation does not necessarily make a person lonely, but many lonely people are isolated in one way or another.

Recent studies from throughout the western world have identified isolation and loneliness as a major and growing concern. For example, 44 percent of older New Zealanders report that they are lonely and in Japan, one quarter of those who live alone may go days without having a conversation with another person. These were some findings of a study which involved Professor Norah Keating of the University of Alberta and the Global Social Initiative on Ageing. Keating points out that social isolation and loneliness are not an inevitable part of normal ageing, but there are patterns and predictors in who will be lonely. She cites a Statistic's Canada study which included a sample of 3799 Canadians aged 65+ which came up with some interesting conclusions about what is and is not a predictor of loneliness. For example, men tend to report being lonely more than women, and it's not the number of friends you

have, but the amount of contact you have with them that determines how lonely you feel. Another finding revealed that changes in life circumstances like the death of a spouse or divorce are predictors of loneliness.

However people who were never married are not more likely to report being lonely. People who belong to several community organizations report being less lonely than non-joiners. Surprisingly, religious attendance or non-attendance was not a predictor of loneliness in the study.

A report from researchers at Brigham Young University found loneliness, social isolation and living alone have a negative effect on health. "The effect of this is

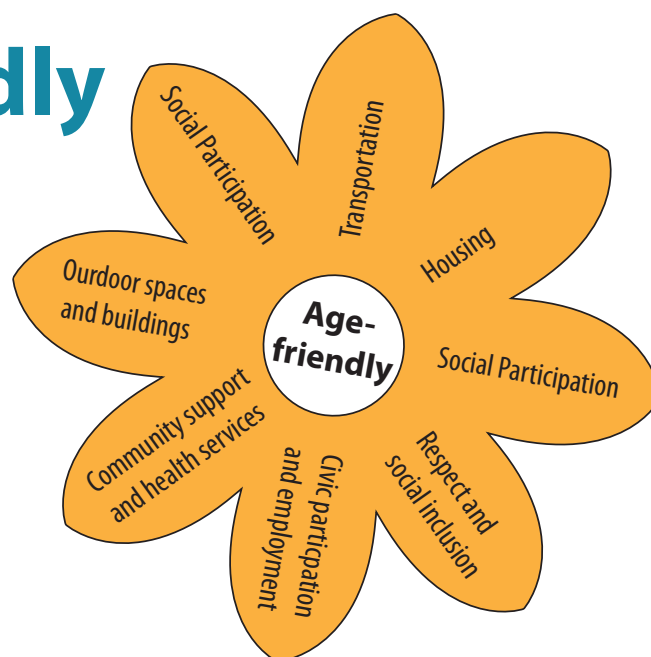
comparable to obesity, something that public health takes very seriously," lead author Julianne Holt-Lunstad said. "We need to start taking our social relationships more seriously." Many groups throughout Nova Scotia are doing just that - looking at ways to engage isolated seniors in the community and to help increase opportunities to connect socially. Community Links is involved in several of these efforts, including the "Let's Talk" Sessions in Pictou County, "Helping Hands" in Caledonia, and "Fitness Where We Are" in Spryfield and Westville.

*For more information about these efforts to confront social isolation, contact Community Links.*

**We have all known the long loneliness, and we have found that the answer is community.**

*—Dorothy Day*

# Creating Age Friendly Communities - One Step at a Time



IN 2007, the World Health Organization (WHO) produced its Age Friendly Cities Guide, in recognition of two global trends: aging population and urbanization. Research was done in 33 cities around the globe, including Halifax, Nova Scotia. Older adults and other community members were asked to say what makes a community age friendly. Based on these responses, the WHO came up with a variety of factors shown in the diagram at right.

Recognizing that many Canadians live in rural communities, the Canadian Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors initiated a survey of rural and remote communities and developed a related guide. Guysborough County was included in this survey. Fortunately, the categories used by the WHO apply equally to urban and rural communities. In Nova Scotia, the Department of Seniors has taken the lead in promoting the concept of Age Friendly Communities and in supporting municipalities to create and implement age friendly plans.

Community Links and its Ageing Well Together Coalitions support the age friendly concept at the grass roots level, having carried out a variety of community projects, in partnership with seniors groups, local organizations and municipal representatives. In one recent example, HRM Ageing Well Together Coalition worked with Municipal Councillor for Dartmouth South-Eastern Passage Bill Karsten to install three benches in strategic walking routes in the community of Eastern Passage. This relates to the WHO finding that "The availability of seating areas is generally



*Councillor Bill Karsten and daughter Kerry Karsten (member of HRM Ageing Well Together Coalition) enjoying the bench installed at Quigley's Corner in Eastern Passage*

viewed as a necessary feature for older people: it is difficult for many older people to walk around their local area without somewhere to rest." Three benches were strategically placed along walking routes in Eastern Passage with the idea that this will encourage seniors to get out and walk to local destinations. Of course, the benches are meant for everyone, which is key to the age friendly concept: what is good for an older population benefits all ages.

*For more information about the project, or to find out how you can get involved in an Ageing Well Together Coalition, contact Community Links at 1-855-253-9355 or visit our website [www.nscommunitylinks.ca](http://www.nscommunitylinks.ca)*

# Shopping can prevent falls!

**N**EED SOME gift ideas for the seniors in your life? Community Links and its Ageing Well Together Coalitions have come up with a list of inexpensive and easy to find gifts for the older adults on your list. In fact, these items will help prevent falls at any age.

There are ten Ageing Well Together Coalitions around the province, made up of senior volunteers and organizations that serve seniors. The following list of gift ideas is adapted from



the “Don’t Fall for Christmas” list developed by the Colchester-East Hants Ageing Well Together Coalition.

## Falls Prevention Gift list

- Plug-in night lights for bathrooms & hallways around the home.
- Florescent tape to mark the edges of steps, thresholds, and other potential trip areas both inside and out.
- Rubber backed non-slip mats to replace dangerous scatter rugs
- Bath-chair to make getting into and out of the tub safer.
- Non-slip mats for inside and outside the tub and shower area.
- Cordless phone to be kept on or near user.
- Sensor lights for outside entry areas.
- Laundry cart with wheels.
- Small flashlights for pockets, bedside, beside TV - for power



*One suggestion: a certificate for an exercise program.*

- outages
- Long-handled shoe horn to reduce the chance of bending over and losing balance.
- Long-handled reachers for reaching things in high places, instead of climbing.
- New slippers with proper sole-grips to replace their old floppy ones.

- “Icers” to fit over boots for winter days. (caution-these are not to be worn inside- they can damage floor surfaces and cause a slip-and a fall!)
- A metal tipped cane for outside use on icy days.
- Gift certificate for snow removal, home repair or yard work services.
- A set of pre-paid taxi chits for use on snowy or icy days.
- Certificate for exercise program suited to individual’s fitness level and age.

*For more information about Community Links and Ageing Well Together, contact 1-855-253-9355 or visit our website for a contact in your region. [www.nscommunitylinks.ca](http://www.nscommunitylinks.ca)*



# Holiday Safety Tips

*The busy holiday season is no time to experience a fall. Community Links wishes you a safe and happy holiday with these tips to keep you on your feet.*

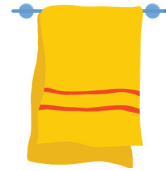
## Scatter mats

Did you know that nearly two thirds of falls that lead to hospital admissions occur at home? Scatter mats and loose rugs increase your risk of falling. Keep rug edges secured down with double sided tape or remove loose rugs altogether.



## Bathroom safety

If you weigh more than a wet towel, don't trust a towel rack to support your weight. Far too many seniors are injured after a fall in the bathroom. You can make your home safer by installing grab bars in the tub, shower and toilet area.



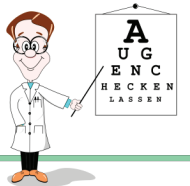
## Nutrition

Did you know that proper nutrition and a well balanced diet can help prevent falls? Adequate protein intake can help maintain muscle mass and strength. To promote bone health, in addition to a healthy diet, Osteoporosis Canada recommends 800 to 2000 IU of Vitamin D and 1200mg of calcium per day for adults over 50.



## Vision

Did you know that poorly corrected vision and age-related diseases of the eye are major contributors to the number of falls experienced by seniors? Having your vision checked regularly can help reduce your risk of falling. In Nova Scotia, MSI will cover an eye exam at least every 2 years for those over 65.



## Physical activity

Did you know that each year, one out of every three Canadian seniors will suffer a fall? Lower your risk of falling by maintaining your strength, flexibility and balance. For those 65 and over, the Public Health Agency of Canada recommends 30 minutes of physical activity per day, 5 days a week, in sessions of 10 minutes or more. Always check with your doctor before starting any new physical activities to make sure they are safe for you.



## Medication use

Are your medications putting you at risk of falling? Certain medications can cause dizziness or have a negative effect on your ability to balance. Review your medications once a year with your doctor or pharmacist to monitor how your medications are affecting your risk of falling.



## Stairs

Stairs present one of the most dangerous falls risks, especially to seniors. Make your stairs safer by ensuring they are well-lit, installing railings on both sides, and painting the edges of stair treads in a contrasting colour.



## Falls

Did you know that falls are the leading cause of injury to seniors in Canada? Sadly, many seniors who are hospitalized after a fall are never able to return home. Uneven floors, stairs without railings, and poor lighting are common hazards that can easily be adapted to improve safety.

- 64% of falls requiring hospital admission occur in the home – this is significantly higher than the national average. Make your home safer by removing clutter and making sure all walking paths are clear, inside and out.
- Falls can result in pain, suffering and loss of independence? Making our homes and communities safer for seniors will make them safer for all of us. Check your home and your community for potential hazards.
- As Nova Scotia's population ages, the number of injury-related hospitalizations and deaths continues to increase. If we aren't able to slow this pattern, our province will be spending \$462 million on fall-related injuries by the year 2035.



Brought to you by  
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# Unwrap these Holiday Sweets

Can you unscramble the letters below to spell a variety of sweet things for the holidays?

CEOOISK	
CHNPU	
GAERDBERNIG	
USNT	
PEALP	
IREDC	
NOMNANCI	
IETFKUCAR	
NGGOEG	
OOTELCAHC	
NOAEGR	
CADYN CAEN	
IEPMPTREN	
YCND	

## ANSWERS

CANDY
PEPPERMINT
CANDY CANE
ORANGE
CHOCOLATE
EGG NOG
FRUIT CAKE
CINNAMON
CIDER
APPLE
NUTS
GINGERBREAD
PUNCH
COOKIES





### COMMUNITY LINKS

**Join us!**  
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Fill out the form on our website  
at [www.nscommunitylinks.ca](http://www.nscommunitylinks.ca)  
or call your district  
representative.

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