



February 2009



Up Front

Sandra Murphy

Shortly after I took my position with Community Links in 2004 I toured the province conducting focus groups with members to identify the issues which were of particular importance to them. Transportation was high on everyone's list. What we heard prompted us to choose transportation as the theme for our September 2004 newsletter. It also encouraged our decision to become involved in this issue at a policy level over the long term.

It is now early 2009 and transportation needs are still high on the list of concerns for Nova Scotia seniors. This doesn't mean that nothing has happened in the intervening four + years. A lot that is positive has occurred to move this issue along at a policy level and on the ground where it matters most.

So just what are some of the things that have happened since 2004?

- Community Links developed a workshop called *Seniors Influencing Policy – Transportation* and

supported three groups to work on this issue locally.

- The Nova Scotia Community Based Transportation Association (NSCBTA) has expanded its mandate and scope of concern. It has come to recognize the need for a continuum of transportation options that benefit the disabled, seniors, the economically disadvantaged and the environment. Community Links is active with its work.
- **The Strategy for Positive Aging**, released in December 2005 by the government of Nova Scotia, includes as one of its nine goals that: "Affordable, safe and accessible transportation options are available to seniors." Community Links took this goal as one of the main focuses for its February 2008 Peoples' School.
- More monies have been available from the provincial government for the start up of Community Based (Dial- A- Ride) services and for supporting existing services. A new service was started in the Strait Richmond Area and one will soon be underway in Cumberland County.
- More money has flowed from the federal government for support of public and community based transportation programs.

- The Ecology Action Centre has developed a *Green Mobility Strategy* which provides an excellent blue print for transportation services in Nova Scotia.

Much is happening to push the transportation agenda forward, but it is also clear that the expansion of transportation services is only part of the shift that needs to occur. Attitudes and expectations of those who might benefit from different transportation options must be changed. It is not always true that “if you build it they will come”.

We are all very wedded to a model of transportation which was fostered by the availability of the private automobile. Many seniors will not utilize public transportation services or balk at booking Dial-A-Ride, door to door services where they exist. Some successful long term community based transportation services that would love to add seniors to their list of regular users struggle with their image as the “handicapped bus”. New services have to work very hard to build a ridership in a timely fashion to support their continuation, even in communities that cried out for their development.

No transportation service will ever provide the convenience of the private automobile, but if transportation services of all kinds are to expand and flourish we all will need to modify our attitudes to “getting around”. Much has happened since 2004, but there is a still lot to do. We all need to *climb on board* in our efforts and in our attitudes.

Spreading the Word

This past fall, Community Links Board members and staff worked on two new ventures in the area of communications.

After realizing that the words “community” and “links” can mean many things to many people, we developed the “tag line” ~ ***supporting seniors’ wellbeing*** to go with our Community Links identity. We hope this will help those who are not familiar with our organization to understand what we are about.

Senior Connections

Brought to you by:



We also decided to offer a monthly newspaper column called ***Senior Connections*** in a selection of regional weekly newspapers on a pilot basis. So far, the *Masthead News*, the *Lighthouse Log*, and the *Inverness Oran* have generously agreed to carry the column. December’s column dealt with seniors and depression during the holiday season; January’s was titled “Winter-Enjoy it Safely”, and this month’s column is about seniors and income tax. We welcome comments from members who receive these papers, including your ideas for upcoming issues.

Community-Based Transportation Programs and Services

CTAP/ATAP- Community Based Transportation Assistance Program and Accessible Transportation Assistance Program. These programs are administered through Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations. They provide funding to Municipalities and community based non-profit organizations involved in the delivery of inclusive and accessible transportation services in low-population density areas of the province. ATAP funding is also available to the private sector. **Contact:** Georgina Dimock c/o Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations Ph: (902) 424-5965

Dial-A Ride Nova Scotia is a provincial government listing/contact system for community based inclusive transportation services that have funding through CTAP/ATAP. Currently there are 11 Dial-A-Ride registered services in the following areas of the province:

Yarmouth	Colchester
Kings	Pictou
Clare	West Hants
Annapolis	East Hants
Cumberland	Chester Area
Strait Area	

To book a ride with the service in your area, call the toll free Dial-A-Ride number
1-877-305-7433

Chester and Strait Area are not yet on the phone system
Contact Chester at 902-275-5585
Strait Area at 902-625-1475

NSCBTA: The Nova Scotia Community Based Transportation Association is a non-profit organization made up of groups interested in providing for the unmet transportation needs of Nova Scotians, Many of the members of NSCBTA are involved with community based transportation services, and are part of the Dial-a-Ride system. Other members, like Community Links, are not providing or funding transportation services, but are interested in working at the policy level and in education and promotion of inclusive transportation for groups in the population (for example, seniors) who do not have access to affordable, accessible transportation. Contact: David Mooney 902-761-3395 davidmooney@eastlink.ca

VON/Private Services: Assistance with transportation is available through both private and non-profit organizations in some areas. Several VON branches in the province provide transportation assistance, along with a host of other services. For a list of VON Branches and their services, visit the website at <http://www.von.ca/branch/ns.html> or call the VON Eastern Region Office in Halifax Tel: (902) 981-2429.

TRAX: The Ecology Action Centre operates a number of efforts to encourage sustainable transportation in Nova Scotia. One of the programs under TRAX is the Green Mobility Program, which provides funding to a variety of efforts that will improve access to sustainable transportation.
Contact:
Jen Powley
Sustainable Transportation Coordinator
902-429-0924
www.ecologyaction.ca/content/trax



One of the newest transportation services in Nova Scotia is Strait Area Transit, "A unique, community based, public transportation model serving the Strait Area of Nova Scotia"

Strait Area Transit is a non-profit charitable organization made up of a volunteer board of directors along with many partners and sponsoring organizations. The organization was established after extensive consultation with the community.

SAT's goal is to provide an all inclusive, accessible, and affordable means of transportation to all residents of the Strait Area. Unlike many community based services in the province, where passengers phone ahead to arrange individualized trips, SAT runs on fixed routes between communities in the Strait Area with stops along the way (for example: **L'Ardoise-St. Peter's-Port Hawkesbury-Mulgrave** and **Mulgrave-Port Hawkesbury-Isle Madame**). Dial-a-Ride Services are also available in some areas served. Routes, schedules and fares are available by visiting SAT's website at <http://www.strait-highlands.ns.ca> Then click on *Special Projects* or by calling 902-625-1475 or email straitareatransit@ns.aliantzinc.ca.

Seniors, Caregivers and Others in HRM:

What Transportation Problems Are You Experiencing?

Seniors are experiencing a lack of affordable and accessible transportation, making the task of staying active in the community very challenging. A recent survey of municipal candidates in Halifax Regional Municipality found that access to transportation for seniors was a prime concern, even in areas of the municipality served by multiple bus routes.

reachAbility wants to find out what transportation seniors in HRM currently use, and what barriers and gaps they have faced.

The ultimate goal is to provide transportation for seniors which allows them to keep their independence and continue being involved with community activities. This in turn promotes good health. Results of the study will be published online and in a brochure outlining the project findings.

Please contact

Sandy at **reachAbility**

(902) 429-5878 or info@reachability.org with your thoughts or suggestions.



CPC Update

Community Links President Carol Ward and Executive Director Sandra Murphy attended the Canadian Pensioners Concerned AGM

held in Moncton, New Brunswick last fall. One of the items discussed was the possible amalgamation of CPC with the Canadian Federation of Seniors and Retired Persons (CFSRP), since these two groups are often working towards the same ends.

Recently, CPC partnered with the CFSRP to present a brief to federal officials to promote seniors' economic concerns leading up to the Federal budget. These two groups were also involved in lobbying for the recent federal income splitting provisions for pensioners. Other areas of interest include affordable housing and insurance, Pharmacare, depression, and elder abuse.

Community Links is the Nova Scotia Division of Canadian Pensioners Concerned, and has representation on the Group of IX, a group which advises the Nova Scotia Government on issues concerning seniors.

Reserve the date: Annual Caregivers' Luncheon Friday, May 1, 2009. Tickets \$35. For further information or to purchase tickets, contact 421-7390, or 1-877-488-7390 or email: projects@caregiversNS.org.

Winter comfort recipe:

Homemade Oatcakes



- 1/3 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/2 cup white flour
- 1 3/4 cups quick oats
- 1/4 cup brown sugar (or more to taste)
- 1/2 cup soft margarine (non hydrogenated)
- 3 tablespoons hot water from kettle
- pinch of baking soda

Mix the first four ingredients in a bowl. Work in the margarine so that the mixture resembles a coarse meal. Add the three tablespoons of hot water and the pinch of baking soda. Form the moistened ingredients into a ball with your hands, then press out into two 1/4 inch thick circles on an un-greased cookie sheet. Use a table knife or pizza cutter to cut the circle into triangles. Bake at 375° for 10-12 minutes. Cool and serve with homemade jam or preserves



Winter Q&A

Q. What do you get from sitting on the ice too long?

A: Polaroids.

Q: If you live in an igloo, what's the worst thing about Global Warming?

A: No privacy.

Q. What did the big furry hat say to the warm woolly scarf?

A: "You hang around while I go on ahead."



Tax Time!

It's getting to be that time of year again, and with the economy the

way it is, seniors will want to take advantage of any tax breaks available. Here are a few ideas:

Income Splitting: The new provisions for pension income splitting which came in last year can benefit many seniors who are married or have a common-law spouse. At tax time, taxpayers with various types of retirement income can allocate up to half of such income to a spouse. Note that the other spouse does not actually receive the split income—it is only recorded as their income at tax time. You don't necessarily have to be 65 to take advantage of this—those who retired early and are receiving a registered pension can be eligible for income splitting. Don't assume that splitting works only for high income retirees. Depending on your circumstances, it can provide tax savings for those with moderate incomes.

OAS and CPP payments are not eligible for the above type of pension splitting, but you can apply to Revenue Canada to have your Canada Pension split between you and your spouse. In this case, the monthly pension payments are actually reallocated between spouses.

New for 2009: Tax Free Saving Accounts: Starting in 2009, these accounts may be useful to seniors who are beyond the age (71) where they can

contribute to an RRSP. Unlike RRSP's they do not affect future eligibility for supplements like the GIS. Talk to your bank or financial advisor.

The disability credit is another tax option that some seniors may consider. As we age, changes in our health status may mean that we are now eligible for this tax credit. If the person with the disability does not need this credit to reduce income tax, it can be transferred to a spouse or other supporting person. Talk to your family doctor if you feel you may be eligible. Your doctor or other eligible health professional will have to fill out a form, which is available from CRA. For information about how to apply for the disability tax credit call 1-866-741-0127

Caregiver Amount: Are you over 65 or infirm, have a modest income, and have recently moved in with a family member (e.g. child or grandchild)? They may be able to claim a caregiver tax credit whether or not you actually need any regular care.

For more information about these tax options, you can speak to a tax professional or contact CRA at www.cra.gc.ca or call **1-800-959-8281**

(Press the star key * to speak to an agent).

OAS and CPP Recipients: Are you getting all the benefits you can?

Service Canada is happy to review your file with you.

Click servicecanada.gc.ca

Call 1-800-277-9914 toll free



Preventing Falls Together

~a program of Community Links

Coalition Highlights:



Carry Grit, Sprinkle It and Avoid a Fall

Walking in the winter can be an adventure. To help seniors feel more comfortable being out and about in the winter months, the Guysborough County Coalition launched a “grit bag” project in November. Based on similar projects in Ontario, more than 500 grit bags were distributed to seniors. A “grit bag” is simply a small bag filled with sand that you can sprinkle on any icy spots you may come across.

Coalition members created partnerships with local organizations and businesses in their communities to distribute the grit bags and a brochure that contained information on the Coalition along with general falls prevention tips. Partners in the project included the District Medical Centre in Isaac’s Harbour, pharmacies, seniors’ clubs, and churches. The sand for the project was donated by Central Supplies in Antigonish. Thanks are extended to all those who worked with the coalition on the project.

You can make your own grit bag by pouring a cup or two of traction sand into

a strong baggie or other container. Be careful not to make it too heavy. Carry a bag of grit with you to sprinkle on the slippery spots and help avoid a fall.

Keeping physically active and engaging in social activities are important to your overall health and well-being and can reduce your risk of falling.



The Guysborough Grit Bag team: From left to right: Ester Baker Duggan (Chair), Shirley Nixon, Eileen Power, Kaye Cohoon, Don Colp, Nina Roberts, and Janelle Colp (Vice-Chair).

Falls Prevention Day 2008

Falls Prevention Day was celebrated in November across the province of Nova Scotia. This was a time to focus attention on the impact of falls and the way individuals, organizations, communities, businesses and governments can make changes that will reduce the number of falls and fall-related injuries. This year the Preventing Falls Together program focused on increasing municipal governments’ involvement.

In addition to being proclaimed by the provincial government, Falls Prevention Day was also proclaimed by the following towns, cities and municipalities: the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, Amherst, Antigonish, Canso, Cumberland, Guysborough, Oxford, Parrsboro, Pictou, Stellarton, Stewiacke, Springhill and Halifax Regional Municipality. It was also proclaimed by the Cumberland District Health Authority.

Several coalitions had the opportunity to meet with their Mayors to discuss the issue. In Guysborough County, presentations were made to municipal Councils and the grit bag project was launched.

Falls Prevention Day activities received some media coverage. The Antigonish County Coalition worked with the local newspaper, *The Casket*, which published a two page spread that included information on the Coalition and its work, a contest, and the *Don't Fall for Christmas* gift suggestion list as well as separate coverage of a meeting with the Mayor. HRM Coalition member, Alex Handyside, wrote an opinion editorial that was published in the *Chronicle Herald* and generated a lot of discussion. The *Cape Breton Post* covered a meeting of coalition members, seniors and the Mayor and published an article and picture. The Preventing Falls Together Program Coordinator, Susan King, was interviewed for CBC Radio's *Maritime Noon* program. Articles written by Dawn Thomas and Carol Welch of the Digby Coalition were also published.

Additionally, coalition members in various parts of the province included falls prevention information in their columns in

community newspapers and organization newsletters.

Many coalition members encouraged the organizations with which they are



Linda Janega (District Nursing Officer, Veteran's Affairs Canada and CBRM Coalition member), Susan King (PFT Program Coordinator), Emerson Jessome (Vice-President of the Cape Breton Council of Senior Citizens and Pensioners), Mayor John Morgan, Clotilda Yakimchuk (President of the Cape Breton Council of Senior Citizens and Pensioners) and Sydney senior Alice Beckwith.

associated to have educational presentations to staff, volunteers and clients, make printed resources available, and display posters.

Carolyn Bolivar-Getson, MLA and at the time the Minister of Seniors, spoke at the board of directors meeting of the South Shore District Health Authority.

The Department of Health Promotion and Protection, the Recreation Facilities Association of Nova Scotia and Recreation Nova Scotia partnered with Preventing Falls Together to develop a *How Safe is Your Recreation Facility* project that will be launched in 2009.

To all who helped celebrate Falls Prevention Day 2008, thank you! Coalition members are congratulated for continuing to increase the public's awareness of falls prevention and for developing innovative ways to work to reduce falls.



Get a Grip on winter walking

Devices worn on the bottom of boots and shoes to help prevent

us from slipping on ice and snow have become increasingly popular. Some programs, including our own, have promoted the use of these devices for seniors to help prevent winter falls. Over the holiday season, a number of Community Links/PFT staff and family members tried out different types of these devices, which are sold under such brand names as *Icers*, *Yaktrax*, *GripOns*, and *STABLEicers*. We found that once they are on the foot and worn outside, they do work well to give a better grip. However, there are some words of caution:

- You really need to be sitting down to put these on. A sturdy chair or bench near the door will make this much safer.
- The type that stretch over the bottom of the shoe may be difficult for frailer seniors to pull on, so they may need assistance. Models with Velcro fasteners may be a better choice.
- Although they are easier to take off than put on, don't try to pull them off while standing on one foot—sit down first or at least hold on to something sturdy.
- **Don't** wear them indoors. The kind with studs can play havoc with your floors, and several models are quite slippery on indoor surfaces.

Staying Independent- Keeping Strong at Home

Research has shown that strengthening exercises are both safe and effective for most women and men of all ages, including those who are not in perfect health. Besides physical health benefits, regular exercise can have a profound impact on mental and emotional health, as well as helping to prevent falls and fall related injuries.

Several PFT Coalitions around the province have been collaborating with District Health Authorities and other groups and agencies to make the Home Support Exercise Program available to more Nova Scotia seniors. The program was developed and tested by the Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging.

It consists of 10 safe, simple, yet progressive exercises

A wall push-up is one of the 10 exercises



that can be done in the home or in a small group without special equipment. It is especially geared to seniors living at home who, for a variety of reasons, (lack of transportation, physical limitations, affordability) cannot get out to programs in the community. To find out more about the program and view a diagram of the 10 exercises visit:

<http://www.geriaticsandaging.ca/PDF/PDFJuly2003/0607homesupport.pdf>

Although the HSEP exercises are very safe for most people, it is recommended that you talk to your physician or physiotherapist before starting any exercise program.

Coalition Member Profile: Hilda Gmyz



Q. *What is your background?*

A. I'm originally from Dartmouth, but lived out west for 14 years. In 1986 I returned home to

Nova Scotia and started working with the Red Cross. Since that time I have held several positions within the organization - fund development, administration, and now as Coordinator of the Health Equipment Loan Program. I also act as lead Associate, serving as the connection with Red Cross Service Centres around the province.

Q. *How did you get involved with the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) Preventing Falls Together Coalition?*

A. Seniors Falls Prevention is certainly a good fit with my present position. I got involved with the Coalition at first as a way of networking and promoting the Health Equipment Loan Program. I enjoy helping people, as well as being challenged and involved. I wasn't sure what I could contribute to the Coalition at first, but I have really been able to put my skills and interests to good use. I am grateful for the opportunity to share my expertise in an area that is close to my heart.

Q. *What have you and your Coalition been up to lately?*

A. One of our big initiatives is the Senior Parking Spaces project. This past fall, I negotiated with Wal-Mart on behalf of the Coalition and they have agreed to place

senior parking spots in eight Wal-Mart Stores (four stores in HRM, one in Bridgewater, Digby, Yarmouth, and New Minas). Wal-Mart is the third retailer to come on board with this very important project.

Q. *What are some of the issues you see in your work that relate to falls?*

A. One of the many reasons a client may come to the Red Cross to borrow equipment is that they have fallen and need an assistive device. Through the Coalition I was able to participate in training for the Home Support Exercise Program (HSEP). Last April, I took a Train the Trainer workshop. In March, I will be offering the training to Red Cross Home Support workers and to HRM Coalition members. The program teaches seniors a set of 10 simple, yet progressive exercises they can do in their own home. Keeping up strength and balance are important in maintaining independence—And using the right assistive devices properly—if you need them!

Q. *Is there anything else you would like to comment on?*

A. I think more needs to be done to educate the senior population on ways to remain independent and active. We need to ensure seniors are aware of some of the ways they can remain independent by reducing their risk of a fall. This may be through an assistive device, like a cane or walker, or through keeping fit and active, or both!

Hilda Gmyz is a member of the Halifax Regional Municipality Preventing Falls Together Coalition. She can be contacted at hilda.gmyz@redcross.ca



Notes and Notices

Peoples Schools 2009

Get connected with your community by attending the second of Community Links two mini-Peoples Schools planned for March 27, 2009 at the Lions Hall in Kingston, NS from 10-3:30. The focus is on Financial Security and Supportive Communities.

Call 422-0914 for more information, or email admin@nscommunitylinks.ca

Seniors and Internet Use



Researchers at Mount Saint Vincent University are conducting a study on seniors' well-being and

Internet use as they relate to

their health concerns, financial needs, and social interactions. The study is open to anyone who is 65 years or older, regardless if you use the Internet or not. To participate, you can contact Dr. Paul Brunet at Mount Saint Vincent University. You may email him at Paul.Brunet@msvu.ca or call him and leave a voicemail at 457-6173. In your email or voicemail, leave your name, your phone number, and your mailing address. You will be sent questionnaires in the mail. You simply fill out the questionnaires and return them in the envelope provided (postage is prepaid). If you decide to participate, you will participate within the comforts of your own home. To thank you for your participation, you will receive a \$10 gift card.

New Horizons for Seniors

New Horizons will soon be issuing a call for proposals for Community Participation and Leadership Funding. A wide range of non-profit activities led by seniors are eligible for up to \$25,000. You may want to send a representative from your group to one of the information sessions planned for Sydney, Goshen, Truro, Bridgewater, Yarmouth, Kentville and Dartmouth between March 10 and March 19, 2009. For more information, visit the website at <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca> and type "New Horizons" in the search box, or call toll free: 1-800-277-9914 (Press '0' to speak to an agent.)

Volunteer Week is

April 19-25, 2009

Recreation Nova Scotia organizes The Annual Provincial Volunteer Awards. To find out how to submit volunteer award nominations, visit the following site:

<http://www.recreationns.ns.ca/volunteerawards>
or call 902-425-1128

Deadline is March 06, 2009

GANS Annual AGM and Conference
Gerontology Association of Nova Scotia
April 24th, 2009 at Mount Saint Vincent University.

Theme: *Emergency Preparedness for the Older Adult*

Contact: gansconference@gmail.com



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