

July 2012

Upfront



Sandra Murphy
Outgoing Executive
Director

A Tribute and a Good-bye

This is a time of transition for Community Links. We are celebrating twenty years of service to seniors' well-being in Nova Scotia. This is indeed a milestone and as you will see by the contents of this newsletter and our annual report for 2011-2012, we have much to celebrate. I have been approaching my impending retirement confident that Community Links is on firm footing with a dedicated and committed Board in place, a competent and professional staff who are doing good work around the province with the help of many community partners and volunteers, and a successor on board in the person of Anna Wartacz, who will bring new ideas and energy.

But life does not always march according to the tune that we are trying to play. This was the case for Community Links when on May 19th our President, Terry Smith, died unexpectedly while enjoying a well-deserved weekend away with his wife Barb in Montreal. Terry had been President for two years and was prepared to serve another year in order to help with the transition in Executive Directors. He loved Community Links and was a strong champion and spokesperson for our work in his home tri-counties district and at the provincial level. Community Links recognized his strong leadership qualities by nominating him for the Remarkable Seniors Leadership Award, given out annually by the Department of Seniors, and I was delighted to sit

and beam proudly with his wife Barb just a year ago when he received it.

Terry threw himself into many volunteer endeavours including the VON, the John Howard Society, the Shelburne Transportation Society, the Board of the DHA and many more. He took his responsibilities very seriously and worked to fulfill them to his best ability and beyond. He served on numerous Boards but he made his greatest impact through the personal touch. Terry would call on a regular basis just to check in. If someone was having problems of any kind he would call more regularly. He was ever supportive and although incredibly busy, always had time to listen and advise. I miss him as I move toward retirement, as I know he would have been there with a supportive ear and a quick joke to ease my way.

Terry has left a legacy with Community Links. One of his last tasks for Community Links was as a member of the selection committee that worked so diligently to appoint my successor, Anna. There is also a strong Board to step in behind him and we are very fortunate that Bill Poole, our previous Vice President, moved quickly to take up the reins as President at a very difficult time.

We are so thankful for Terry and the time he gave us. We are all much richer for having known him. Thank you to Barb, Margaret, his mother and to his boys and their families for sharing him with us.

Thank you to all of you in the Community Links family for allowing me to meet and serve with folks like Terry over the course of the last eight and a half years. I will miss Terry and I will miss you all.



Memories and Reflections from the Early Days

Marilyn More, Provincial Coordinator 1992 – 2003

In some ways it seems like yesterday that we celebrated the big launch of the *Challenge in Participation Project* (1989-92), more commonly referred to as CHiP, in Truro in 1992. It was actually the final sharing and learning event for representatives from the 6 areas of the province – Moser River area (Halifax County), Tracadie area (Guysborough County), Framboise area (Cape Breton), Advocate Harbour area (Cumberland County), Long and Brier Islands (Digby County) and East and West Green Harbour/Jordan Bay area (Shelburne County). What a celebration of hard work, volunteers, shared learning and community action together! And the concept of continuing as “Community Links” was already underway.

CHiP used a community development model of working together to identify the needs of seniors and persons with disabilities living in isolated rural communities and to develop volunteer-driven programs and services to support them. Word had spread across the province but there was little time and no money to expand under the original federally-funded project. Yet many villages, towns, community groups, service-providers, etc were expressing interest in learning more about this approach. Add to the expanding interest a mix of key CHiP community leaders who wanted to continue to meet and share their success stories and support each other and we had the ingredients for Community Links!

The next 10 years for Community Links were a mix of highs and lows, mostly driven by funding availability. But the network continued to grow and grow and grow. And we expanded our role and partnerships to evolve into its current face and role.

What stands out for me are the amazing community leaders, mostly seniors, across NS who worked tirelessly every day in their communities and on behalf of Community Links, with generosity of spirit, strong sense of caring, high energy levels and constant humour. One always felt better after a visit to their community, local program or a provincial meeting. They instilled in me the recognition that “how we do things is as important as what we do”. And there was always time to have fun!

We added entertainment as much as possible in the first five years to every meeting of the provincial board of directors, workshops and community programs. Most of the provincial gatherings were held at the Mount Saint Vincent Motherhouse and the Sisters of Charity looked forward to the occasional larger socials we organized there as singsongs, dances, skits, musical presentations, etc along with the evening snack. Other times we used smaller rooms and sang songs in different languages, told jokes, dressed in historical costumes, played music and games, and indulged in the ever-popular skits and short plays.

We had the luxury of time and close working relationships in those days, forming friendships and bonds that have lasted years and lifetimes. Interestingly, two of my closest friends today were the Health Canada Program Officer for CHiP, Margie Macdonald, and the CHiP Coordinator, Susan Nasser. I continue to meet and re-connect with Community Links “family” across the province and treasure those friendships. Your wise counsel and warm support continue – thank you!

Congratulations to all those associated in any way with Community Links during its first 20 years – job well-done – NS is a better province for your interest and work – many thanks!



Sandra with Board members. From left: Doris Soley, Ken Kennedy, Sandra Meister, Bill Poole, Sandra Murphy, Elizabeth Henri, Emerson Jessome, Alma Johnston and Mary MacLellan

To Sandra
By Carol Welch

Now Sandra gave Links its direction
And often she dealt us correction
Which we on the Board
Have NEVER ignored!
So with new life she gave an injection

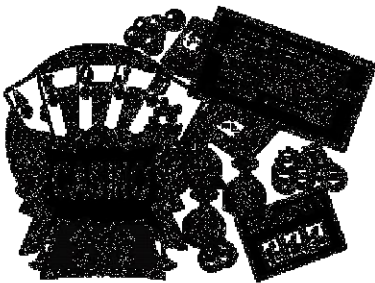
Happy Retirement!!

From the members of Community Links

Carol Welch is a past President of the Community Links Board of Directors and has remained actively involved with the organization.

Seniors and Gambling –Phase III

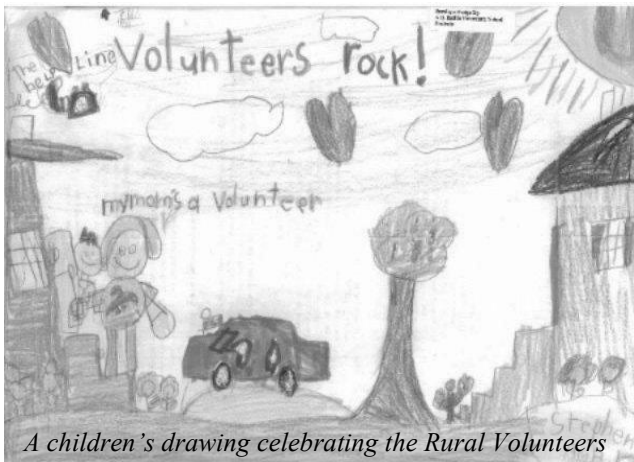
One of the last efforts that our retiring Executive Director, Sandra Murphy completed was to secure three years of funding for work on the issue of Seniors and Gambling. This project will continue to raise awareness of the issue through the popular skits developed in Phase II of the project, and to work on supporting communities to take action on lessening the negative effects of gambling and to find alternative ways for seniors to connect socially and participate in community activities. Look for more information on the project coming this fall. Many thanks to Gambling Awareness Nova Scotia for its support.



Supporting Volunteerism

One of the things that may confuse people about the role of Community Links is its focus on support for volunteerism and the voluntary sector. Everyone readily identifies us with seniors and their issues but, understandably, ask about the focus on volunteers. What I often say, because the dual focus was in place when I joined the organization, is that volunteerism and a strong voluntary sector are keys to strong communities which in turn enhance and support seniors' ability to age well in age friendly communities.

My first real involvement with Community Links came about around this very focus. I had recently moved back to Nova Scotia and was working as a private consultant and trainer and was invited to present at two day-long events for local volunteers, one in Monastery and one in Horton. They had been organized by local planning committees under the auspices of Community Links' Rural Volunteer Project (RVP) which was being coordinated by Susan Sanford. These were just two examples of many such events that were held around the province by groups of folks who wanted to increase the capacity of volunteers in rural Nova Scotia. Volunteers, I learned later, were also supported to come together at provincial "People's Schools" for skills and knowledge development and also for networking and sharing of ideas.



A children's drawing celebrating the Rural Volunteers

Like all Community Links efforts, RVP was a partnership with other provincial organizations including: Recreation Nova Scotia, VON, Canadian Cancer Society, Heart and Stroke Foundation and Coastal Communities Network.

The regional planning committees evolved into a number of RVP Coalitions which worked to develop initiatives to support local volunteers and voluntary sector groups. When funding disappeared, several of the coalitions continued their work and Community Links was well placed to partner with Recreation Nova Scotia as the Nova Scotia co-host for a multi year initiative of Volunteer Canada called the

Canada Volunteerism Initiative (2005 - 2009). This in turn contributed to increased support for volunteerism and the voluntary sector at the provincial government level. This included the naming of a Minister of the Voluntary Sector and Volunteerism, the establishment of Nova Scotia Volunteer Community Advisory Council, the signing of a Collaboration Agreement between the voluntary sector and the provincial government. Community Links belongs to a group called the Network of Networks, supported by the provincial government. It involves local and provincial networks, working to build capacity among volunteer and staff in the sector. Many member groups have evolved from RVP Coalitions or were partners along the way with Community Links in its work.

The focus on support for volunteerism and the voluntary sector has underscored Community Links' role as a catalyst for change. This work has also informed and shaped our work with seniors. The RVP Coalitions were a model for our 12 current Ageing Well Coalitions. The popularity of the RVP People's School has led to our using that model as a way to engage seniors in healthy public policy across the province.

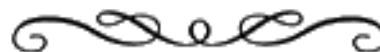
Reflections – Canon Sid Davis *An interview with Sandra Murphy*

Those of you who have had a long term involvement with Community Links will be very familiar with the name of Canon Sid Davis. He was involved with Community Links almost from the beginning and was our second President. You will also be pleased to know that at 100 years of age he is still living at home, with his second wife Ruth in their house on North Mountain near the Look Off with a wonderful view down over the Valley. They are able to maintain their independence with the help of family and Kings Point to Point Transit service. Sid continues to be a role model for “ageing well”.

I spoke to Canon Davis to get his reflections on the occasion of our 20th anniversary. He talked about the early partnership between the VON and the Anglican Church which led to work in six small communities around Nova Scotia (see previous article by Marilyn More). This development work led to seniors doing things for themselves and, as Canon Davis recalled, when seniors from nearby communities saw what was happening they wanted to be part to that effort. “This is how the links formed and the links started to grow”. The AGMs were a highlight each year and a time to form linkages across the province. The AGMs were often held at Motherhouse at Mount Saint Vincent University, and were a “wonderful time of sharing”.

“The thing that made us happiest was getting money from the government.” It was like trying to get the “earth to move” but then it did. He went twice with Marilyn More, the Provincial Coordinator, to meet with government officials to help make this happen. It was this funding that allowed the organization to continue to grow.

Canon Davis is just one of the many volunteer board members who over the past 20 years have contributed to the development, growth and outreach of Community Links. They kept and still keep the organization rooted in communities and in the real issue of seniors across the province.



From Preventing Falls to Ageing Well: Ten Years of Awareness, Action and Change



For almost 10 years, Community Links and its Preventing Falls Together Program have worked to raise community awareness about falls among Nova Scotia seniors. Starting in 2002-2003 Community Links, in partnership with the Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command and VON Canada-Nova Scotia sponsored the Health Canada funded Falls Prevention Initiative. This program formed falls prevention coalitions around the province and developed the first edition of the Preventing Falls Together-Population Health Tool Kit, which served as a working guide for coalition members and other organizations involved in falls prevention activities. These activities ranged from developing and adopting fall prevention policies in coalition member organizations, to attending local health fairs to spreading the concept that most falls are “predictable and preventable”.

In 2004, the Falls Prevention Initiative became Preventing Falls Together –a program of Community Links with funding provided by the Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection (now Health and Wellness). Coalitions, supported by

Regional staff, have carried out community projects such as the Hazardous House project, “Don’t Fiddle With Falls”, Maintaining Independence Through Exercise, Senior Friendly Hiking Trails Assessment, Parking Spaces for Seniors, and many other educational events and environmental changes. Notable provincial projects have included Fall Proof Your Place of Worship, Mobility: Now You’re Going Places and Year of Ageing Well Calendar. A second edition of the Preventing Falls Together Population Health Tool Kit was produced by program staff in 2007.

Falls prevention is very much on the agenda of most organizations today, both private home care and community public health, hospitals, the workplace, and even the retail sector. Much still needs to be done to make our communities age-friendly, but Community Links is proud to have been part of the move to increase community knowledge and capacity in the area of falls prevention.

In 2011, Community Links and its funding partners in Health and Wellness began the process of changing from Preventing Falls Together to Ageing Well Together. Coalitions have broadened their scope of interest, while keeping falls prevention as a key priority. Recent efforts have included promoting the Home Support Exercise Program and seniors fitness in general, maintaining and expanding the Mobility Workshops, and producing a second, and now a third edition of the Year of Ageing Well Calendar. Coalition work is more fully integrated into the strategic plan of Community Links, and coalitions are enjoying the opportunity to work on such issues as housing, intergenerational understanding, and mental health, using a population health approach. They recognize that for seniors to be truly healthy, they must not only consider the physical health of

individuals but also the mental, emotional and spiritual health of seniors as they live in their communities.

None of this work would have been possible without the leadership of Sandra Murphy, Community Links Executive Director since 2003, Julian Young from the Department of Health and Wellness, Carol McAllister, our first Provincial PFT Coordinator, Susan King, who succeeded Carol in the position, and a dedicated regional staff. However, the biggest secret to our success has been the Coalition members themselves, community leaders, volunteers and committed staff persons of many senior and senior serving organizations. A one day conference being planned for November 2012 will provide an opportunity for Coalition members to celebrate the successes of the past and look forward to an age-

Looking Forward



Welcome, Anna Wartacz!
Executive Director

Community Links would like to take this opportunity to welcome aboard our new Executive Director, Anna Wartacz. Anna comes to Community Links most recently from a position in long term care as Administrator at Glades Lodge. She is well versed in the issues facing seniors today and is armed with the knowledge and experience to lead our organization into the future, as we continue to support seniors across Nova Scotia.

Anna stepped into her new role on June 18, and worked closely with Sandra to ease the transition period in the weeks before Sandra’s retirement. Anna, from all of us here at Community Links, welcome and we look forward to working with you.



Notes and Notices



It's back! 2013 Year of Ageing Well Photo Contest

Our photo contest is back again this year for the 2013 Year of Ageing Well Calendar. We're very excited to be launching this contest again, and look forward to receiving your submissions!

We are looking for photos featuring seniors participating in ageing well activities from all areas and from all cultural backgrounds found in this province. Make sure seniors in your community are showcased by sending us your images! Ageing



2012 Calendar first place winning photo by Laura Fraser, Halifax

well activities can include cooking, dancing, participating in community events, volunteering, reading, engaging in physical exercise or spending time with family or friends, and much, much more!

For more information, please visit our website at www.nscommunitylinks.ca or contact Aileen Furey at aileen@nscommunitylinks.ca or by telephoning 902-422-0914 or toll free 1-855-253-9355.

New Toll Free Number 1-855-253-9355

Community Links is pleased to announce the availability of a new toll free number for those members outside the HRM area who wish to contact the organization. This number has been added to the contact information on this and all other publications we will be distributing.



Mobility Workshops

How do I know when I need a cane or walker? What is the proper height for my cane? How can I make my bathroom safer? These questions and others can be answered through our popular Mobility Workshops. To arrange for a workshop for your group, contact Community Links Provincial Office at 902-422-0914 or email info@ageingwelltogether.ca

Have you heard the news? 211 Service is coming to Nova Scotia!

Starting in February 2013, Nova Scotians will be able to access free, confidential help for themselves and their families 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. If you have any questions or require additional information on the 211 service, please feel free to contact info@ns.211.ca or by phone 1-902-466-5720 You may also wish to visit the website at www.ns.211.ca .

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