



December 2007

Up Front

Evelyn Lindsey



Lifelong Learning has been defined as a “process of keeping the mind and body engaged – at any age – by pursuing knowledge and experience.”

Canada’s population is aging rapidly, with approximately 13% of the population over the age of 65. This percentage is expected to rise to 23 -25% by the year 2031. However, research shows that more older adults are staying in the workforce because of the lack of skilled workers in society. Employers are beginning to recognize the value of the wisdom, work ethic and dependability of older adults, and are doing more to encourage them to further their knowledge and to keep them in the workforce.

Brain experts have indicated that mental acuity begins to decline between the ages of 60 and 70 due physiological changes in the brain. What can we do to slow this process? We must seek out intellectual stimulation such as formal or informal

You don’t stop learning when you grow old, you grow old when you stop learning
~Simon Fraser University

education, leisure activities and getting involved with the community. One way of getting involved is to use the wealth of knowledge gained over a lifetime to tutor students in schools and universities. This not only provides help for the students, it helps stimulate the brain and creates valuable intergenerational relationships.

Older adults make a great contribution to the community through volunteering. Participation in both formal and informal education will not only enhance our mental acuity but will increase the value of voluntarism to the community. Some educational institutions in Canada are responding to this need by offering free or reduced tuition for courses, seminars and workshops. Unfortunately, not all universities and colleges in Nova Scotia provide tuition free courses.

Research has shown that older adults spend considerable time learning, and most of it is of the informal variety. This is done by reading books and magazines, writing, discussion with family and friends, participating in senior center activities, and visiting the library.

What are some of the barriers to lifelong learning? Inadequate literacy skills are a great barrier for some older adults. A 2003 International Adult Learning and Skill survey showed that only 18% of

adults over the age of 65 reached the literacy threshold considered necessary for coping well in a complex knowledge society. In Nova Scotia, this percentage is even higher. Many older adults did not have the opportunity to complete high school.

Another barrier is decline in cognitive skills. Age related memory decline can affect our learning and retention of new information. Thus, learning requires more time and repetition.

Dealing with new technology is another barrier. Developing skills in the use of computers is a challenge to many older adults who may not own or have easy access to a computer.

What are some of the solutions to these challenges or barriers? Because each person's capacity to learn differs, it is essential to seek out opportunities that match our ability. As indicated earlier, education can be both formal and informal. We can check out local universities or colleges. Many municipal recreation departments provide low cost education opportunities. The Public Library System offers many learning opportunities, as well as assistance in researching the educational opportunities that meet your needs. There are Adult Learning Centers in many communities where one can attend classes in all subjects and also receive one-on-one tutoring. You may check with your local Community Health Board to see what educational programs they are offering and encourage them to bring these programs to your community centers.

Local Senior Centers frequently offer programs and activities.

Some of the benefits that can be realized from lifelong learning are:

- Improves the memory
- Offers an inexpensive way to experience something different.
- Gives a feeling of accomplishment.
- Increases social connections
- Provides an opportunity to learn new skills.
- Develops reading, writing and math skills.
- Gives an opportunity to help others who are in need.
- Profession retirees can develop workshops for other seniors.

A desire to keep learning is a great motivator to get out of bed in the morning and out of the house to fulfill our goals. To quote the mantra of Simon Fraser University: "You don't stop learning when you grow old, you grow old when you stop learning."

Evelyn Lindsey lives in Antigonish and is Community Links Board member for District 9. Evelyn has a long involvement in literacy and is herself an avid life-long learner.

Congratulations to Doris Evans!



Community Links past Board member Doris Evans was honoured recently with the Lieutenant Governor's Intergenerational Award. This is a new award that recognizes community volunteers and organizations who

encourage or inspire interaction and bonding between age groups. The theme of the awards is “Generations Growing Together”.

Doris was awarded the *Outstanding Volunteer Award: Older Generation*, for a lifetime of service improving the literacy of youth in her community. The award is supported in partnership between the Department of Seniors, The Youth Secretariat and the Rotary Club of Halifax.

Learning to Live With Type 2 Diabetes: Attitude Makes a Difference

Since October, the *Attitude Makes a Difference* Project has been holding focus groups throughout Atlantic Canada.

In Nova Scotia, focus groups were held in Sackville, Digby, Berwick and Cheticamp. The Cheticamp group was moderated in French by Community Links member Yvon LeBlanc.

Preliminary findings from the focus group reports indicate that seniors are coping with a diabetic life style despite many difficulties. Two main sources of support and information were highlighted in the focus group discussions: Diabetes Educators and diabetes peer support groups. Without a doubt, the role of the Diabetes Educators in the community was the main reason why seniors were able to manage their diabetes and prevent complications.

Many participants spoke of the need for diabetes support groups and several decided to form a group in their community in the near future. In Berwick, most participants were part of the Berwick Diabetes Peer Support Group. They enthusiastically described the ways in which their group helped them to cope with the many challenges that face a diabetic, such as social gatherings where food is plentiful, getting in a daily walk when the streets or sidewalks (if available) are slippery or uneven, and the feeling of being overwhelmed that results from trying to keep blood sugar levels where they should be. There was a feeling of ‘sisterhood’ between these women who shared the same experiences, hopes, fears and a lot of laughter.

Next Steps: the Provincial Focus Group Reports will be analyzed and a Final Report will be prepared, translated and shared throughout Atlantic Canada. This report will include a description of how seniors themselves see diabetes, identification of ‘best practices’ in diabetes prevention and treatment, and key actions that are needed to enhance the quality of life for those living with diabetes

Need information about Type 2 Diabetes?

Visit the Nov Scotia Regional Website
of the Canadian Diabetes Association
www.diabetes.ca/section_regional/ns.asp
or phone Toll Free: 1 800-326-7712

Libraries and Life-Long Learning

Generations of Nova Scotians have used the public library system to connect with the world of knowledge and opportunity. Most library branches in the province offer:



- internet access
- talking books, large print and other services for those with disabilities
- books by mail or mobile library service and delivery of books to nursing homes
- courses on topics of interest

Following are some highlights of the many opportunities available through nine regional library sites around the province.

Several branches of **Halifax Public Libraries** offer rewarding volunteer tutoring opportunities. If you have some time to spare, and would like to help make a difference in someone's life, call **902-490-5991** for more information.

The Gates Computer Lab in **Western Counties Regional Library's** (WCRL) Yarmouth branch offers a number of programs and courses of interest to older adults. Upcoming courses include: Internet and Computer Basics, Purchasing a Computer and Introduction to File Management. For more information or to register for a course, call **1-902- 742-2486 Ext. 243**

The Truro branch of the **Colchester East Hants Public Library**, located at 754 Prince Street, Truro, offers a free program for older adults called "Prime Time". Access the website at www.lovemylibrary.ca to see the activities that are available. Computer classes are offered when staffing permits. Contact the library via the website, or call **1-902-895-4183**

Come to the free Seniors' Cafés at the **Cape Breton Regional Library's** McConnell Library in Sydney: Tuesdays 1:00 - 3:30 pm. Get involved in informative and entertaining sessions on topics such as Storytelling, Genealogy, Nutrition, Tai Chi and Qi Gong. Refreshments provided. For transportation assistance call **1-902-539-6868 ext. 2**. To register for the Cafés, call **1-902-562-3161** or visit the library.

Eastern Counties Regional Library (ECRL), serves the counties of Guysborough, Richmond, and Inverness. Drop by a library to check your email, read an online paper, or surf the net! The Sherbrooke Library hosts a Seniors' Cafe on Friday mornings at 9:30, year round. Seniors are invited to drop by at that time for an hour of lively discussion, informal one on-one training on the internet and use of email. For information about all programs, call ECRL Headquarters at **1-902-747-2597**.

The **Annapolis Valley Regional Library** introduced a *Books By Mail* service in September 2007. This free outreach service is provided for residents of the Valley who live more than 10

kilometres from a library branch, or who are physically unable to visit a branch. Clients can select titles from booklists or the online catalogue, and the books will be mailed out, with return postage paid. Anyone interested in the service can call **1-866-922-0229** or email booksbymail@nsar.library.ns.ca.

The Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library offers a wide variety of adult programming, including a monthly **Seniors Café** at several branches (New Glasgow, Pictou, and Westville). These cafés host guest speakers, musicians, health and safety training, films, and more! For more information about services that are available visit www.parl.ns.ca or call **1-866-779-7761**.

The Cumberland Regional Library has branches in many communities in Cumberland County. Several of the branches offer **book clubs** and the Amherst branch offers a **classic movie club**.

If mobility is an issue, or you live 5 kilometres or more from an existing branch library in Cumberland County, take advantage of the free Books By Mail service.

To find out more information call **902-667-2135** You can also browse the programs and catalogue online at www.crl.library.ns.ca

The South Shore Regional Library serves Lunenburg and Queens Counties. Specialized programs for seniors include **Seniors Cafe** and **Computer Basics for**

Seniors. Seniors Cafe is offered once a month in each town branch and is a time when seniors are invited to the library to meet and greet each other, full library services are available and there is a guest speaker and light refreshments.

Basic Computers for Seniors is a four week computer tutorial. The classes run for one hour each and the goal of the course is to make beginners feel comfortable with computer technology. There is also free Internet access as well as a wireless computer access at all branches. For information about any of these programs, contact the SSRL administrative office at **1-902-543-2548**, or check out the website: www.ssrlibrary.ca

Nova Scotia's C@P Sites

Computers are available for public use at the many Community Access Program (C@P) sites



across Nova Scotia. These sites are located in libraries, seniors' centres, schools, and other public places. The volunteers who donate their time at the C@P sites provide training, access to the internet and information on distance education. The training topics range from getting connected to the internet and using e-mail effectively to online banking, shopping and security issues. For more information about C@P sites in your area, contact your municipal office or visit:

<http://www.municipalities.com/NovaScotia/index.htm>



Preventing Falls Together

~a program of Community Links

Coalition Highlights

Fall 2007

Changes in behaviour can be accomplished by clearly understanding the problem to be addressed, using evidence and research, combining multiple strategies and working collaboratively. This was part of the message delivered by Julian Young, Coordinator, Injury Prevention & Control, Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection (NSHPP) to PFT coalition members who gathered at the Debert Hospitality Centre for a professional development session on October 11, 2007.

The main focus of the meeting was a workshop on Social Marketing presented by Julian Young and Catherine Kennedy of NSHPP. At the end of the session members were discussing new ways to approach falls prevention in their communities.

The day long session included an overview of the PFT program evaluation final report, which highlighted the activities of coalitions. The evaluation was very positive and we continue to evaluate as we implement falls prevention strategies. The draft version 2nd edition of the Preventing Falls Together: Population Health Tool Kit

was unveiled. The response was overwhelmingly positive and all are looking forward to the final edition which will be available in 2008.



Members of the Digby and Area PFT Coalition at the October 11 meeting.

Falls Awareness Projects

Coalitions around the province undertook community projects this fall as a lead-in to Falls Awareness Day 2007, proclaimed on November 22. Following are just a few highlights.

Halifax Regional Municipality Coalition partnered with Mic Mac Mall to establish some designated senior parking spaces-possibly the first in the province. These spaces rely on the honour system for those who need them. Mic Mac Mall is very pleased with the response so far. HRM Coalition has developed a distinctive stencil to use to designate the

parking spaces, and hopes to expand the effort to other malls in spring 2008.

Colchester East Hants Coalition prepared a “falls prevention” package for local pharmacies, to help them spread the word about falls prevention and safe medication use. A similar project for pharmacies has been undertaken by Digby and Area Coalition.

Pictou County Coalition members are working with Grade 5 classes in area elementary schools in a project to educate children on keeping the seniors in their lives independent.

Antigonish Coalition took out a full page advertisement in *The Casket*, the local newspaper, to draw attention the issue of falls among seniors and to provide prevention tips. The ad was sponsored by local businesses which supported the message and the coalition.

The Guysborough Coalition is working with the Eastern Counties Youth Association to identify falls hazards in public places in Little Dover, Canso and Hazel Hill. Together the seniors and youth will develop a strategy to make some of their public places safer for all. Two members of the coalition include falls prevention tips in the columns they write for the local newspaper.

To get involved with a coalition in your area, contact a coalition member directly or get in touch with one of the PFT staff listed on the next page. For a list of coalitions, visit the website :

www.preventingfallstogether.ca

Coalition Member Profile: Janelle Colp



Janelle Colp spent most of her life in Halifax, but now resides in Guysborough. She took an early retirement in 1988

after spending 25 years with the City of Dartmouth Recreation Department.

Janelle is a founding member of the Guysborough County PFT Coalition

Janelle’s mother Mildred Murphy recently moved in with Janelle and her husband Don. Mrs. Murphy is 98 years old and has attended several coalition meetings! Don and Janelle have two grown children, Elizabeth and Gregg, and one granddaughter Liberty.

Why PFT?: “I suffered a fall myself and so I could relate to the issue. I was given the opportunity to attend the PFT provincial meeting in Halifax in November 2005, as well as the Canadian Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion conference. I really liked what I learned and thought I could contribute. I really enjoy working with seniors.”

In addition to her work with the Guysborough PFT Coalition, Janelle is a member of the Guysborough Community Health Board and the Guysborough Hospital foundation. She has volunteered with many organizations.



New Year's Resolutions to Keep Your Independence

The biggest fear among many seniors is loss of independence. Since 40% of admissions to nursing homes are due to a fall, there is a direct link between falling and loss of independence.

Some of us set our New Year's goals so high that we give up before mid-January. For 2008, let's set some smaller, more achievable goals that could have a big impact on our independence and allow us to stay in our homes as long as possible.

Ten small changes that can help us maintain independence are:

1. Remove scatter mats from the home.
2. Use reaching devices.
3. Store heavy items in lower cupboards.
4. Use a step stool with a rail, never stand on a chair.
5. Clean up spills as soon as they happen.
6. Exercise regularly & safely (check with the doctor).
7. Hold the rail on stairs.
8. Know our medications – check with the doctor and pharmacist about side effects and potential interactions.
9. Clear clutter off stairs.
10. Wear proper footwear (closed back, with a low wide heel or no heel, and non-slip, textured sole).

Canadian Falls Prevention Curriculum

Coming soon to Nova Scotia! The Canadian Falls Prevention Curriculum (CFPC) is a 2 day course on falls prevention for health care professionals and those who work and volunteer at the community level. The course includes identifying the risk factors, looks at the statistics, examines best practices, and addresses how to design successful falls prevention strategies.

Six people in Nova Scotia have been trained as facilitators of the CFPC and some of those are also master trainers capable of training others to become facilitators.

Nova Scotia Health Promotion and Protection will be the lead agency offering CFPC training throughout the province. We anticipate that the course will be offered in several locations in NS beginning in February 2008.

More information about opportunities to participate in this course will be available in January.

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Christmas Cards

I don't know the original writer of this poem, but it was sent to us by a wonderful old gentleman in Westport, South Dakota, who spread cheer wherever he went, and never forgot his friends at Christmas with a special poem or writing. **Carol Welch**

I have a list of folks I know, all written in a book,
And every year at Christmastime I go and take a look;
And that is when I realize that these names are a part
Not of the book they're written in, but of my very heart.

For each name stands for someone whose path touched mine, and then
Left such a print of friendship that we want to touch again.
And while it sounds fantastic for me to make this claim,
I really feel that I'm composed of each remembered name!

And while you may not be aware of any special link
Just meeting you has changed my life a lot more than you think,
For once I've met somebody, the years cannot erase
The memory of a pleasant word or of a friendly face.

So never think my Christmas cards are just a mere routine
Of names upon a Christmas list, forgotten in between!
For when I send a Christmas card that is addressed to you
It's because you're on the list of folks that I'm indebted to.

For one's, in part, a total of the many folks they've met,
And you happen to be one whom I prefer not to forget;
And whether I have known you for many years or few,
In some way you have been a part in shaping things I do.

And every year when Christmas comes, I realize anew
The best gift life can offer is meeting folks like you!
So may that wondrous Christmas spirit that is timeless and endures
Leave its richest blessings in the hearts of you and yours.

Seasons Greetings from Community Links Board and Staff

Below we share a few favorite recipes for holiday treats. Thanks to Community Links President, Carol Welch for supplying the first two recipes.

Chocolate Peanut Butter Squares

(Weight Watchers)



1/4 cup peanut butter
1 tablespoon honey
1 1/2 cups Rice Krispies
1 package sugar free

chocolate instant pudding
1 cup fat free whipped topping

Microwave peanut butter and honey for 30 seconds Stir.

Stir in Rice Krispies.

Press into an 8-inch pan

Make the pudding as directed. Stir in the topping.

Pour into pan, and freeze solid.

Add more topping to serve.

Hot Spiced Cider Tea

A good alternative to sweet mulled cider for those watching their sugar intake.



2 (4-inch) cinnamon sticks
1/2 teaspoon whole black peppercorns
2 to 3 whole cloves
3 to 5 whole cardamom pods
5 coin-size pieces fresh ginger
2 (1-inch) strips fresh orange peel
2 (1-inch) strips fresh lemon peel
5 cups cold water
4 bags orange-pekoe tea
3 cups apple cider
1 orange, juiced

Scotch Shortbread

This recipe has 3 ingredients, and is the best shortbread recipe I know. It is a must at our home at Christmas. -Carol Welch,



1 pound butter - it **must** be real butter
4 cups flour
1 cup icing sugar

Cream the butter and sugar. Don't let the butter get too soft.

Blend the flour in gradually.

Divide the dough in quarters and pat into circles 1/2 inch thick.

Flute the edges and prick with a fork.

Place on baking sheet and chill for 1/2 hour.

Bake at 375 for 5 minutes, then at 300

degrees for 45 minutes to 1 hour

Lightly crush the cinnamon, peppercorns, cloves, and cardamom pods in a mortar and pestle or on a cutting board with the bottom of a saucepan. Transfer to a medium saucepan, add Combine the ginger, citrus peels. Put the crushed spices in a medium saucepan and add the water. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer, partially covered, until aromatic, and the cinnamon stick opens a bit, about 10 minutes. Add the tea bags, immediately remove from the heat, and steep for 3 to 4 minutes.

Recipe courtesy of the food network.



Notes and Notices



Peoples School

Save this date!

February 22 and 23, 2008

Community Links is planning another one of its popular peoples' school events to take place at Debert Hospitality Centre. Workshops will focus on some of the issues identified during Community Links' development of *The Action Plan for Positive Aging in Nova Scotia*. Free registration for community volunteers who wish to attend. Beat the winter blahs and recharge your community activist batteries! Look for more information coming soon



Celebrating 30 Years

The Gerontology

Association of Nova Scotia celebrates 30 years at its Annual Conference on April 27, 2008 at Mount Saint Vincent University. Mark your calendars now for this important event. Program details can be checked at www.nsnet.org/gans.

Community is not built upon heroic actions, but rather upon the love shown in the little things of daily life.

Jean Vanier

January is Alzheimer Awareness Month



The Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia provides a variety of programs and services for persons with dementia, their loved ones and caregivers. The Alzheimer InfoLine is available for resources and support. Call **1-800-611-6345** (outside Metro) or **(902) 422-7961** or contact them by email at info@alzheimer.ns.ca

Tax Savings for Seniors and Retirees



Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) is introducing pension income splitting for the 2007 tax year. This may particularly benefit couples where one partner's income is higher than the other. One spouse can allocate up to 50% of pension income to the lower income spouse, potentially placing the higher income spouse in a lower tax bracket. Pension splitting may also make the lower income spouse eligible for the pension income amount (tax credit), which has been increased from \$1000 to \$2000. Check with your financial advisor or tax preparer for more information, or contact CRA at **1-800-959-8281**.

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