



The Image of Seniors

October 2007

Up Front Sandra Murphy



Perhaps it is because I work in the field of aging, or because I just turned 60, but everywhere I turn these days I see or hear something related to the aging population. Many times the messages are contradictory. One day I'm reading a story of a man of 101 years who is still driving and doing so competently. More often, though, I'm reading headlines that blare "older driver" every time one is involved in a traffic accident. We obviously can't ignore the fact that there are older drivers on the road who shouldn't be there, but how do we address the concerns of the far greater number of competent older drivers who feel criticised based on their age rather than their driving abilities? Perhaps this is an issue we should take up with the media.

In the meantime, the advertising world, which continues to pursue the baby boom bulge and its buying power, is filling our TV screens and magazines with images of finely toned, impeccably coiffed but grey haired older people who are busily hiking mountains because they

ate the right margarine; being courted to work past retirement; bathing in walk-in tubs; vacationing on tropical beaches; borrowing against their mortgages to get to that beach; and having medically enhanced great sex when they get there. Who wouldn't want to be old?

Most seniors in Nova Scotia fit neither the images created by advertisers nor the stereotypes like the "dotty but sweet old lady" or "grumpy and cantankerous old man." Rather than walking tropical beaches, many older people, especially women, are living lives of desperate poverty. Rather than creating havoc on the roads, thousands upon thousands of seniors across Nova Scotia and Canada are actively involved in their communities and are helping to improve the lives of others.

What then is the reality? The truth is there is no one reality. It is a long way from 60 to 101 and many realities will exist for an individual senior who may be making that journey. The 65 year old walking hand and hand on the tropical beach with the "love of her life" may become the frail sweet old lady in a nursing home wheelchair. The perception we want to fight is that we are all the same: that because we are over a certain age, we somehow fit neatly into

one or even a few boxes. We are fit and we are unhealthy; we are good drivers and we shouldn't be behind the wheel; we are nice and we are nasty; we are rich and we are poor; we are active and we are lazy; we are conservative and we are radicals; we like Dolly Parton and we like Madonna. There are and will be many realities for each of us in our aging journey. Some of them we can anticipate, but many are an adventure waiting to happen.

Our Membership Has Changed

This spring, the Community Links Board of Directors agreed to accept individual members in addition to our group members. This will be on a trial basis and will be discussed again at our AGM in 2008. Anyone 55 years plus is invited to join Community Links and receive the same membership services as our group members. Member Services include newsletters and e-bulletins, invitations to special events and learning opportunities, and a chance to have your opinions heard. Our membership form is available on our website at www.nscommunitylinks.ca (click on Members) or you can contact the office at 902-422-0914 or by email at admin@nscommunitylinks.ca.

AGM Highlights

Community Links held its AGM in May 2007 at Mount St. Vincent University in Halifax. Guest speaker Dan Leger, Director of News Content for the Halifax Herald, spoke about how groups can get

the attention of the media and answered some questions from participants. The issue of why newspaper articles mention a person's age in most human interest stories was asked. The example on everyone's mind at the time was a fatal pedestrian accident in Dartmouth involving an older driver. Mr. Leger defended the use of age to describe people, but only if it has relevance to the story. Mr. Leger's advice to groups wanting to get media coverage for their issues and events is to "make your story compelling."

Honouring retiring Board member Dora Fuller was another highlight of the AGM. Dora has had a long association with Community Links and remains active in her community of Parrsboro. Dora is one of the key players in efforts to get community based transportation for Parrsboro and area. Thank you from all of us Dora and keep up the good work! We are happy to welcome Doris Soley as our new Board member for District 5: Cumberland. Doris will be profiled in our December newsletter



Seniors and Diabetes Focus Groups to be Held in Nova Scotia

The Atlantic Seniors Health Promotion Network (ASHPN) will be holding focus groups throughout the Atlantic Region in

the fall. The purpose of the focus groups is to find out how seniors view themselves as diabetics or pre-diabetics, and to understand what helps and what is needed to prevent diabetes or to live a healthy, satisfying life with diabetes.

We are particularly interested in hearing from older, single women who live in rural or semi-rural areas and have limited incomes (those who receive part or all of the Guaranteed Income Supplement) because the cost (financially, socially, emotionally, and physically) of preventing or living with diabetes may be especially difficult for these seniors.

The Focus Groups are part of a project called “Attitude Makes a Difference”, funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and sponsored by the Atlantic Seniors Health Promotion Network (ASHPN). The mandate of ASHPN is to connect people, organizations and government agencies throughout the Atlantic Provinces who work for and with older adults. Community Links, a member of ASHPN, is administrating the project and is a member of the project’s Nova Scotia Advisory Group.

Attitude Makes a Difference seeks to identify the best practices in diabetes prevention and treatment among seniors, to understand how those with pre-diabetes and Type 2 diabetes feel about their disease, and to identify what is needed to enhance prevention, treatment and support.

The project has funds for two to four focus groups in Nova Scotia (planned for

October and November). We invite interested seniors, community groups and organizations to contact us if you wish to have a focus group in your area or if you wish to attend a focus group. If you are interested, or have any questions, please contact Jane McNiven, the Nova Scotia Coordinator at: j.mcniven@ns.sympatico.ca or call her at 902-477-9791.

Nova Scotia Diabetes Supply Centre

When you purchase your supplies at the Diabetes Supply Centre, your money goes a long way – you're supporting diabetes research, service, education and advocacy.

The Supply Centre carries all the latest in testing equipment, including test strips, syringes, and insulin pumps. Since no dispensing fees and only standard markups are charged, the supplies can often be less expensive than those obtained at your pharmacy. Mail orders of \$200 or more are shipped free of charge.

Centres are located at:

101 - 137 Chain Lake Drive (Bayers Lake) in Halifax

Phone: (902) 453-4232, press '1'

Toll-free: 1-800-326-7712, press '1'

E-mail: nsgeneral@diabetes.ca

and

8 Hugh Street in Sydney

Phone: (902) 564-6461

E-mail: cbstore@diabetes.ca

Ageism: Turning the Tide

Age discrimination can be defined as *discriminating against people purely on the grounds of their chronological age*. Many of us at one stage of life or another know the feeling of being patronized or dismissed because of our age. Teens tire of being told “you’ll understand when you are older,” while the impression given to some older adults may be “you would understand if you were younger.”



In a study carried out by researchers at the University of British Columbia, some seniors mentioned feelings of “being invisible” to others, and felt a “disconnect” between how they feel, and the way others seem to perceive them. One female study participant put it this way: *“Well, you see an outside picture that doesn’t really feel like the inside picture... all of a sudden, sometimes you just look in the mirror and catch this picture of someone who actually looks much older than you feel.”* A man in the same study commented that there are places where he felt he didn’t belong because of age. *“I would like to go to a rock concert, but...I mean, 30 years younger than me, and I just don’t feel comfortable in that situation, unless there’s a better mix.”*

On the positive side, several of the seniors in this study saw a lot of value in being older: *“I think there’s a certain amount of freedom in having lived however long”* was the way one man put it. This includes the freedom to reject the

stereotypes about age and challenge some of the built in age barriers in society.

An example of this is the recent challenge to mandatory retirement age. The September 16th edition of the Chronicle Herald ran a story about the need for Canada and other western countries to eliminate mandatory retirement in the face of demographic reality. Our workforce is aging, and unless employers can retain older workers, there will be a serious labour shortage in the near future. Nova Scotia has introduced a law to eliminate mandatory retirement in most sectors, to take effect in 2009.

This move is in large part a reaction to economic necessity. However, individual seniors have been challenging mandatory retirement on more personal grounds. A physics professor in Winnipeg, who would love to still be in the classroom at age 75, has challenged his faculty’s mandatory 69 retirement age. In France, a 68 year old soccer coach successfully won the right to continue to do the work he loves. The Herald article profiled two Nova Scotians, who at ages 75 and 83 are in the work force full time and enjoying it. The point these seniors illustrate is that a person’s skills, contributions, and desire to work should determine when they stop working, not an arbitrary number.

With the huge generation of baby boomers due to reach age 65 starting in 2011, society will see many more challenges to the concepts of what

constitutes old age. It is predicted that this generation will continue to influence the economic, social and cultural fabric of society well beyond traditional retirement age. As one writer put it "social stereotypes about aging are lagging way behind reality."

According to the 2006 Census:

- The number of Canadians aged 65 and over made up a record 13.7% of the total population of Canada in 2006.
- The number of Nova Scotians aged 65 or older was 15.1%
- Canada is still one of the youngest countries in the G8, as only the United States has a lower proportion of elderly people (12.4% compared with 13.7%).
- Never before has Canada had so many persons aged 80 years and over: their number topped the 1 million mark for the first time in 2006 (1.2 million).
- Nearly two out of three persons aged 80 years and over were women
- The number of centenarians in Canada increased to 4,635 in 2006, up more than 22% from 2001.
- The number of people aged 55 to 64, many of whom are workers approaching retirement, has never been so high in Canada, at 3.7 million in 2006.
- Nearly one out of three Canadians was a baby-boomer (people born between 1946 and 1965) in 2006.

Statistics Canada, 2006 census.

A Fairy Story

A married couple in their 60's were out celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary in a quiet, romantic little restaurant. Suddenly, a tiny yet beautiful fairy appeared on their table and said, "For being such an exemplary married couple and for being faithful to each other for all this time, I will grant you each a wish."



"Oh, I want to travel around the world with my darling husband," said the wife. The fairy waved her magic wand and - poof! - two tickets for the Queen Mary II luxury liner appeared in her hands.

Then it was the husband's turn. He thought for a moment and said, "Well, this is all very romantic, but an opportunity like this will never come again. I'm sorry my love but my wish is to have a wife 30 years younger than me"

The wife and the fairy were deeply disappointed but a wish is a wish...

So, the fairy waved her magic wand and - poof! - the husband became 96 years old.

From Brian Huston at <http://www.seniorsnetwork.co.uk>





Preventing Falls Together

~a program of Community Links

Susan King is New Program Coordinator

In May of this year, Susan King took over the position of Preventing Falls Together Program Coordinator. Susan is well known to the program, having worked as the PFT Field Worker for Eastern Nova Scotia since 2005. Susan took over the reins upon the retirement of Carol McAllister, who had led the program through its first two years of coalition development. There are now 11 Preventing Falls Together Coalitions in Nova Scotia with the mandate of reducing falls among seniors in their communities through awareness and action.

This summer, Susan led staff in the production of a new, improved 2nd edition of the Preventing Falls Together Tool Kit, and in the planning of a one day workshop on October 11. This workshop will allow coalition members from around the province to get together, celebrate the successes of coalition projects, and gear up for another season of action in their communities. Social marketing with a population health emphasis, facilitated by Julian Young, is the “hot topic” for this one day workshop. Susan is based in Sydney and can be reached at 902-539-6098 or coordinator@preventingfallstogether.ca

Introducing Brenda MacKinnon



Brenda MacKinnon is a new addition to the Preventing Falls Together program staff. She is working with coalitions in Pictou County, Antigonish, and the Colchester East Hants area. She will also be working to establish a coalition in Cumberland County. Brenda lives in Antigonish County and is very pleased to be involved in a project that really can make a difference in seniors' lives.

Brenda brings skills learned from years of working in, and with, community organizations. She is a member of the Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board, is a Nova Scotia director for a regional co-operative food retailer and works part-time for a national co-operative focusing on international development. As well, she writes regularly for a co-operative newspaper, gardens, sails, cross-country skis (when we get snow) and enjoys a good novel. Brenda looks forward to working with community members and their organizations as they build coalitions. Contact Brenda at 902-863-5040 or nscentral@preventingfallstogether.ca

Anne Corbin takes on PFT Role

Anne Corbin, Community Links Office Administrator, has taken on coalition development and support for the Halifax Regional Municipality PFT Coalition. Anne has a background in education and community development from “times gone by”, and will continue her administrative work with Community Links. Anne can be reached at the Community Links provincial office at 902-422-0914 or admin@nscommunitylinks.ca

Upright Together-An Intergenerational Project to Reduce Falls

Planning is well underway for the Upright Together



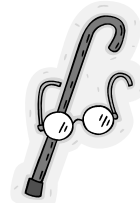
project in Guysborough County. With funding provided by New Horizons, intergenerational groups of 8 to 10 people are getting together in two geographical areas of the county to address issues around falls prevention.

Seniors and young people determine the issue they would like to address and work together on a project that will help raise the awareness of the impact of falls and reduce the number of falls in their communities. Seniors share their skills, experience and wisdom with young people. Youth work alongside seniors, developing leadership and community development skills while addressing the issue of falls. The two generations work together to learn new skills and make an impact on the community.

The Guysborough County Preventing Falls Coalition is acting in an advisory role to the project. Carolann Wilson of the Eastern Communities Youth Association in Canso is supporting the process of helping seniors and youth learn about each other and discover what each age group can bring to the project. It is hoped that most project work will be completed by December.

If this pilot project works well, Community Links hopes to use it elsewhere in Nova Scotia. For further information, contact nscentral@preventingfallstogether.ca or call (902) 863-5040.

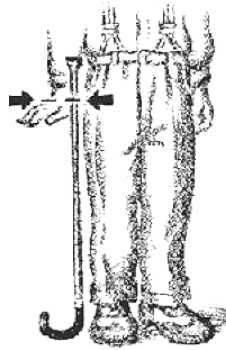
Is There a Cane in Your Closet?



Preventing Falls Together promotes the use of assistive devices like canes to help seniors reduce their risk of a fall. But too often, seniors don't use their canes for fear of looking old or feeble. It's time to start thinking of canes and other assistive devices as a positive help to maintain independence.

Fortunately, canes and walking sticks have become fashionable again. Hikers use walking sticks and Nordic walkers use two “canes” (ski poles and no skis) without embarrassment. Canes come in a wide array of materials and styles from the functional to the frivolous. The city of Ottawa falls prevention program has some tips on how to use a cane for maximum comfort and benefit:

- Make sure your cane is the correct height for you.
- Standing with your arms at your sides, turn the cane upside down and put the handle on the floor. The tip of the cane should be at the level of your wrist.
- Aluminum canes can be easily adjusted on the shaft.
- For wooden canes, remove the rubber tip. Mark the cane at wrist level and deduct ½ inch. Cut the cane and replace the rubber tip
- Always move the cane and the opposite leg together.
- Replace worn rubber tips and attach an ice pick in winter.
- When going up stairs, lead with your strong leg then move the cane and the "bad" leg to the same step.
- When going down stairs, lead with the cane and the "bad" leg then lower the strong leg to the same step.



Seniors and Sneakers



Potentially fatal falls are much more likely if seniors don't wear shoes or wear footwear other than athletic shoes, according to new research. The research, published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, found that seniors who wore any type of shoes other than sneakers increased their risk of falling by more than 30%.

- The risk of falling while wearing loafers or laceup oxfords was 30% - 50% higher than while wearing sneakers.
- The low heel, strong-grip bottom and the firm but flexible support offered by sneakers make them the best choice of footwear for seniors.
- Consider wearing sneakers even while engaging in everyday activities in an around your house.
- CAUTION: be careful wearing sneakers on carpeting. They can "stick" and cause a fall!

Preventing Falls Together Program Staff

Program Coordinator and Eastern NS:

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Central NS: Brenda MacKinnon 902-863-5040 nscentral@preventingfallstogether.ca

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Elder Abuse- Invisible No More

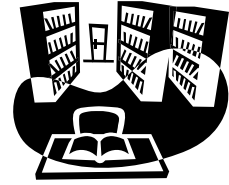
For many years, society has been keenly aware of the problems of child abuse and spousal abuse. Less often does one think of abuse in terms of seniors. However, the problem is very real.



Elder abuse can take many forms, including financial, physical, emotional and sexual. Sadly, as in other age groups, the abuse is often at the hands of family members. The best information available is that four to seven percent of Canadian seniors are abused. However, since abuse and neglect are thought to be seriously under-reported, these figures are often challenged. With the senior population of Nova Scotia expected to double by 2026, the need to address the abuse of older adults will continue to grow. The Nova Scotia Seniors' Secretariat (now called the Nova Scotia Department of Seniors) has developed an *Elder Abuse Strategy: Towards Awareness and Prevention*. For more information about the strategy contact 1-800-670-0065
scs@gov.ns.ca

Your Public Library

There are nine regional libraries with a network of branches and mobile libraries within the Nova Scotia public library system that provide a variety of programs and services to all citizens. Here is a sample of some of the services offered:



- Talking Books (for persons with print disabilities)
- Large Print and CD/DVD Collections
- Assistance in locating and selecting materials
- Telephone access to services
- Home Book Delivery Service (includes delivery to individuals home bound due to illness, age, frailty or caregiver responsibilities)
- Books by Mail and / or Mobile Service
- Programs on topics of interest to seniors (includes local history and heritage)
- Online information services
- Computer training

For specific services near you, please call your local public library or visit <http://publiclibraries.ns.ca>

Call the Senior Abuse Line 1-877-833-3377 for information or to talk about a situation of abuse. Your call will be kept confidential.

If you know of a senior in need of protection, you can also call Adult Protection Services at the Department of Health at 1-800-225-7225

Nova Scotia Volunteer Forum Website Launched

www.nsvolunteerforum.ca

The Nova Scotia Volunteer Forum is a site developed and supported by, and for, volunteers! It is a site where you can look for answers and share solutions. Become a member so you can stay connected with Nova Scotia's amazing volunteer community!

Key Features:

Notice Board: Post a notice to promote an event, workshop, training opportunity, and view notices posted by other volunteers.

Resources: View and post the latest volunteer resources.

Volunteer news: Keep up to date on recent volunteer happenings.

Bi-Weekly digest: Site members receive a bi-weekly email digest with links to all content posted to the website within the last two weeks.

Supported cooperatively by: Recreation Nova Scotia, Community Links, La Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE) and Cape Breton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations

Everything I need to know about life, I learned from Noah's Ark

1. Don't miss the boat
2. Remember that we are all in the same boat.
3. Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.
4. Stay fit. When you are 600 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big.
5. Don't listen to critics. Just get on with the job that needs to be done.
6. Build your future on high ground.
7. For safety's sake, travel in pairs.
8. Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs
9. When you are stressed, float awhile.
10. Remember, the Ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals.
11. No matter the storm, when you are with God, there's always a rainbow waiting...Pass this along and make someone else smile, too.



Submitted by Carol Welch, Community Links President



Notes and Notices

🎵 🎵 Fall Follies 2007

Dartmouth Seniors Choir presents
The Four Seasons in Music
Friday, October 26 at 7 PM and Sunday,
October 28 at 2 PM
At the Dartmouth Seniors Centre
45 Ochterloney Street, Dartmouth
Tickets are \$5 (includes refreshments),
and can be purchased from any choir
member or by calling Carol at
902-465-5578

Choir Director: Leo Poirier

Funding



Opportunity:

Many Community
Health Boards
(CHB's) around the

province offer funding under the
Community Development Funds
program. CHB funding is available for
non-profit community based groups and
organizations, the application process is
simple, and no project is too small. Each
CHB has it own application dates and
criteria. Contact your local District
Health Authority or CHB for more
information. To find out which CHB
your group should contact, visit the Nova
Scotia District Health Authority map
website and click on your region:
http://www.gov.ns.ca/heal/dha_map.htm
or call the Department of Health toll free
at 1-800-387-6665.

Did you know you can receive Community
Links monthly e-bulletin by mail? Contact us by
phone 902-422-0914 or mail to request a copy.

Be a Care Clown!

South West Health will offer Care Clown
training beginning October 20. Once



trained, Care Clowns
volunteer in health care
settings to cheer patients and
staff and to relieve stress. In
particular, South West Health is seeking
residents from Shelburne County so that
a Care Clown program can be
established for Roseway Hospital.
Shelburne, Yarmouth and Digby County
residents interested in becoming a Care
Clown please

register by calling Anne Vickery at 742-
3542 ext. 575.

For more information: Marie Atkinson,
Care Clown Trainer 742-4289

Two Fall Skills Workshops

October 19, 2007

Stewiacke Fire Hall

9:30 AM to 4 PM

Coastal Communities Network, The
Rural Research Centre (NSAC) and the
Atlantic Centre for Excellence in
Women's Health present:

Diversity and Inclusion: Finding our Strengths

and

Marketing Your Message

\$30 for CCN members \$70 non-
members

Contact CCN 902-485-4754 or
coastalnet@ns.sympatico.ca

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We want your contributions!

Members are invited to send in articles, stories, notices of events, recipes, poems, etc for publication in this newsletter. The theme of our next issue is *Seniors and Life-Long Learning*. Send your submissions to

admin@nscommunitylinks.ca or call 902-422-0914 for more information.

Website www.nscommunitylinks.ca

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