



October 2008

Up Front

Terry Smith



My community of Jordan Falls, Shelburne County has many advantages, but for older seniors, it can mean isolation and a

variety of situations that can make them feel less secure.

For example, older seniors who give up driving often lose some independence, which creates a significant change in their sense of well-being. Without close neighbours or family and community supports, this change can be very isolating. Many areas of the province are developing community based transportation services for seniors and others who need access to affordable, reliable transportation. However, nothing like that yet exists in my area of the province.

Older seniors who continue to live in their own homes face safety and security challenges from their physical environment. Carrying in wood for the woodstove, shovelling snow, and dealing with power outages and other storm related events can be a challenge for the isolated elderly. Fortunately, many community based organizations like fire

departments, RCMP Senior Safety Coordinators, and EHS do provide some support for seniors in the community. Personal alarms systems like those offered through InTouch and Lifeline also provide a measure of security.

The difficulty of recruiting physicians to rural areas is another reason that seniors may feel insecure. We are all aware of recent news about regional hospitals facing shortened emergency room hours because of physician shortages. Having suffered two recent health crises, I know first hand what this means to one's peace of mind!

For rural communities to stay viable, supports must be in place for seniors and others. A recent *Age Friendly Rural and Remote Communities Study* sponsored by a Canadian inter-provincial committee of Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors attempted to define what we need to keep our rural communities age friendly. You can view the Guide at.

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/pubs/age_friendly_rural/pdf/AFRRC_en.pdf

Terry Smith recently joined the Board of Community Links as member for District 2 (Shelburne/Yarmouth/Digby). His community volunteer efforts include acting as chair of the Shelburne County Community Health Board

Canadian Pensioners Concerned Update



*CPC President Winnie Fraser MacKay
with Community Links President Carol Ward*

Community Links welcomed Canadian Pensioners Concerned (CPC) President Winnie Fraser MacKay to our most recent board meeting earlier this month. Canadian Pensioners Concerned is a national organization that promotes a society that takes pride in seeing that all persons, regardless of age, have a right to realize their full potential. CPC advocates for seniors at a national level on a variety of issues. Community Links has recently become the Nova Scotia division for Canadian Pensioners Concerned and our President serves on its board. This benefits Community Links members in several ways.

- Provides Community Links with a voice at the National Level
- Provides us with information on national issues which will have an impact on seniors in Nova Scotia
- Provides our membership with associate membership in CPC
- Provides Community Links with a place on the Group of IX, which provides advice on seniors issues to the Nova Scotia Department of Seniors

Look for updates on CPC and its activities in upcoming newsletters.

Safely Home

Alzheimer's disease affects the brain in a number of ways, sometimes causing individuals to forget important details or to "wander". If an individual wanders off away from home and becomes disorientated, this can cause considerable anxiety for both the individual and their caregivers.

In response to these concerns, the Alzheimer's Society of Canada, in partnership with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, has developed a safety program aimed at helping to find and return these individuals.

Safely Home® is a voluntary nationwide program with a one time registration fee of \$35.00, which includes an identification bracelet for the member to wear, a Caregiver Handbook, identification cards, and the ability to update a member file as often as necessary. Upon registration, information about the member is collected and stored in a confidential database that can be accessed by local police across the country. If the member goes missing, police will have immediate access to vital information about the individual, including physical characteristics and personal history. To find out more about Safely Home®, or to register online, visit:

<http://www.safelyhome.ca/en/safelyhome/safelyhome.asp>

For information about Safely Home and other Alzheimers programs in Nova Scotia, contact the Alzheimers Info Line at 1-800-611-6345



Be Prepared! For Disasters and Emergencies

Although emergency workers will respond as quickly as possible in a disaster or emergency, help may not be able to arrive right away. You should be able to take care of yourself for at least 72 hours while rescue crews respond to those who need the most help.

Seniors can play a special role during and immediately after disasters. A life time of experiences makes most seniors more emotionally resilient to emergencies, especially if they can remember similar events in the past. Having more volunteer time also allows seniors to become more actively involved in the recovery process. Seniors can help by volunteering at local emergency shelters, distributing supplies, checking on housebound neighbours, providing transportation to health care and other services, preparing and delivering meals, providing temporary childcare, or by using other important skills or trades, such as carpentry, to help rebuild after a disaster.

The best way to take care of yourself during an emergency is to pack an emergency supply kit and make sure that it is accessible. Be sure to include enough supplies to last for at least three days. The kit should include things such as

- Sanitary supplies such as toilet paper

- At least two litres of drinking water per person, per day. You may want to include more water for cooking and washing, or if you have pets.
- Nutritious, non-perishable food. (canned or dried).
- Can opener and cutlery
- Change of clothing and shoes
- Pillows, blankets, sleeping bags
- Personal hygiene items such as soap and shampoo
- First aid supplies
- Portable radio
- Flashlights and extra batteries
- Money- Bank machines may not be available, so make sure you have cash or travelers cheques
- Lighter or waterproof matches
- Prescription medication
- Paper and pen or pencil
- List of all emergency medical information
- Copy of all important papers such as birth certificate, drivers license, insurance information
- Garbage bags
- Whistle (in case you need to attract someone's attention)
- Something to help keep you busy, like a book or puzzle
- House and Car Keys

Many seniors have special needs that must be taken into consideration during an emergency. If you or someone in your home requires electric-powered medical equipment that is vital to maintaining your health, register with the **Critical Customer Communication Program** of Nova Scotia Power to ensure that you will be on a priority list for restoring power. After a disaster you may not be

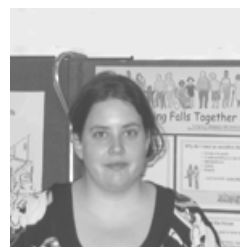
able to access your doctor or pharmacy for a period of time, so make sure you have enough prescription drugs to last for at least a week. Talk to your pharmacist about preparing a bag of medications that you can grab during an emergency, especially if you need to evacuate, and keep this in your emergency kit. Depending upon your own personal needs, you should also consider the following recommendations:

- Include an extra pair of glasses in your emergency kit in case you break or lose the pair you are wearing.
- Stock extra batteries for your hearing aid.
- Keeping a list of medications, including dosage information, and information about any allergies you may have in a waterproof container that can be stored with your disaster kit. Include medical cards and medical insurance information and a list of people who should be contacted if you are injured or become ill.
- If you use other devices, such as pacemakers, be sure to keep all important information about the product, such as model number, in this container as well.
- If you require an assistive device such as a walker or wheelchair, be sure to label your equipment with your name, address, and operating instructions (if necessary). If you are forced to evacuate, this will help prevent unnecessary confusion and will ensure that you will have access to the equipment that you need.

After a disaster, you will need to take time to recover and take care of yourself. While it is important to return to a regular routine, make sure you take time to rest and relax as well. Remember, everyone will react differently after an emergency, and it is only normal to feel angry, sad, or listless after a traumatic event. If these feelings continue to affect your everyday life, consider seeking professional help.

You should also have a list of contacts and develop a support network. If you must evacuate, be sure to register with a local shelter so family and friends can locate you. Having a contact person who does not live in the immediate vicinity is helpful, as they will most likely not be affected by the disaster and will be able to act as a liaison between family members.

Public Safety Canada has a wealth of information about disaster preparedness on its website at www.getprepared.ca.



Patricia Langille worked with us for the summer of 2008. Besides talking to many of our members to update our membership records, Patricia researched and wrote several articles on seniors issues, including this one and the article about Mental Fitness on page 10. Patricia is putting her excellent research and writing skills to good use as she studies for a Master's Degree in English at the University of Guelph. Thanks Trish!

RCMP Senior Safety

Well publicized media reports of crimes can make us feel anxious about our own personal safety, and changes to our lifestyle can increase these feelings of vulnerability. The RCMP can help by educating us on crime prevention while also allowing us to take an active role in keeping our communities safe.

Under the Seniors Safety Program, officers provide information about home security, personal safety and fraud prevention. Community policing officers can help find important resources and can give great advice on how to stay safe in your home and community. Many detachments also offer a Senior Police Academy, a free program where adults 55+ can get information about their rights as citizens and learn about safety and crime prevention. Sessions take place over a number of weeks and may also include presentations by local groups and service providers on a number of topics of interest to seniors, such as fire safety, medication safety, falls prevention and making a will. Check with your local detachment to find out if one of these academies will be offered in your area.

The best way to combat crime while reducing your own level of fear is to become actively involved. The RCMP offers a number of volunteer opportunities, and they welcome the experience and skills that seniors bring to these programs. Here are a few of the programs that seniors regularly volunteer for that you may be interested in:

- Citizens on Patrol – Working together with local RCMP, these volunteers help patrol their home communities, assisting with various tasks including surveillance of public areas. Volunteers use their own vehicles and are in regular contact with the RCMP through the use of cellular phones and police radio.
- Community Office Staff – Many seniors volunteer their time helping to run the local Community offices, ensuring that the public has access to important crime prevention information and resources. Shifts are typically available in various lengths, and resources vary depending on location.
- Crime Prevention/ Drug Awareness Committees – These committees meet regularly to discuss crime prevention and drug awareness, and work closely with N.S. Drug Dependency.

Nova Scotia RCMP has a website with lots of information for seniors about protecting ourselves from crime, including phone and mail scams, street crime, con games, etc.

http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/ns/programs_services/community_policing/comm/seniors/index_e.htm

For more information on local RCMP services or programs, please contact your local RCMP Community Policing Office. Calling **1-800-803-7267** will connect you to the RCMP detachment nearest you.



Drive Safe at Any Age

There are a number of challenges that older drivers face, most of them related to the natural aging process. Although you cannot avoid getting older, there are often things you can do to help adjust to these changes:

- Have vision checked regularly, and compensate for some age related changes in peripheral vision, night vision etc. by taking time to check carefully
- If appropriate, look into devices that can be used to make driving easier, including adaptive equipment like pedal extensions, steering wheel knobs, and hand controls for accelerators and brakes.
- Know the medications you are taking, especially the side effects, and do not drive until you know how these will affect you.
- Consider an on-line assessment of your driving, available through CAA at: http://www.caa.ca/agingdrivers/home_en.html
- Senior Safe Driving Courses are offered in various locations in the province. These are refresher courses, and do not require a road test. As an added bonus, the province of Nova Scotia will pay \$40 towards a recognized program. To find out about a refresher program near you, visit: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/rmv/safe/senior.asp> or call 1-800-898-7668

On The Lighter Side: *excuses offered for vehicle collisions:*



Coming home, I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I don't have.

The other car collided with mine without giving warning of its intentions.

I thought my window was down, but found out it was up when I put my hand through it.

The guy was all over the road; I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him.

I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law and headed over the embankment.

In my attempt to kill a fly, I drove into a telephone pole.

I had been driving my car for forty years when I fell asleep at the wheel and had an accident.

I had been shopping for plants all day and was on my way home. As I reached an intersection, a hedge sprang up obscuring my vision. I did not see the other car.

From: The Toronto Star



Preventing Falls Together

~a program of Community Links

Coalition Update Fall 2008

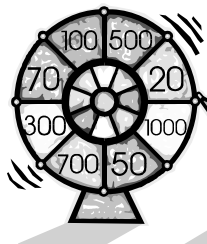
With election fever in the air, PFT coalitions around the province have been engaging municipal election candidates on issues of concern to seniors. A brochure to educate municipal candidates on falls related issues was prepared by program staff, and several coalitions and coalition members have provided these to candidates and followed up where possible. HRM coalition sent out a candidate questionnaire to candidates in 23 urban and rural districts. One of the questions asked was. What three issues are most important for seniors in your area? The majority of those responding said that affordable housing, access to transportation, and safety were the top concerns for seniors. The challenge for Coalitions post-election is to follow up with elected municipal officials and work with them to address our common concerns.

questions and information. To obtain the wheel to use at your event, please contact the PFT Staff person in your area listed on page 12 of this newsletter.



Spot the Hazards!

Autumn is here and many of us will be outdoors enjoying the falls colours. But slippery leaves, icy spots and other obstacles can all be hazardous to your health! When you walk around your neighbourhood, be alert to hazards and obstacles that may cause someone to fall. When you see a trouble spot, bring it to the attention of whomever is responsible for fixing it. Sometimes a photo of the hazard will work best. If you wait to report it, someone may fall.



Wheel of Fortune:

A fun way to educate about falls prevention

Thanks to the efforts of Pictou County Coalition member Faye

Blenkhorn, each region of the province has a beautifully crafted wheel of fortune for use at information fairs, Expo's and presentations. The wheel can be customized with your group's own

On the following page, you will find a resource from our preventing Falls Together Tool Kit that you can use to report a hazard in your community. When you find a hazard, fill out the sheet and send or give it to your municipal office, business owner, or whomever should be responsible for fixing the hazard. You can also give the hazard report to a local Preventing Falls Together Coalition member they can forward it to the appropriate authority.



Reporting Hazards in Your Community

Don't wait for someone to fall! If you see a trouble spot, report it before someone gets hurt. Please report each hazard on a separate sheet.

1. Describe the hazard you found and the location:

Examples: a crack in the sidewalk, burned-out street light, washed-out shoulder along the road, blocked culvert, or potholes.

2. Where is it? Indoors Outdoors

Please be as specific as you can, e.g.:

- The closest street address – for example: the sidewalk in front of 25 Elm Street **OR**
- A description of the location – for example: the bottom step on the first level of the parking garage at County Mall.

3. Do many seniors walk along this route? Yes No

4. Have you ever reported this hazard before? Yes No

If yes, to whom? _____

5. When did you see the hazard?

Date: _____

Your Name: _____ Phone: _____

Local Preventing Falls Together Coalition: _____

Contact Person: _____

Coalition Profile: Dawn Thomas



Q. *What is your background?*

A. I was raised in Digby County and attended the

University of Guelph with a degree in Gerontology. My work background is in long term care management, but when I moved back to Nova Scotia in 2005, I was the successful applicant for the position of RCMP Senior Safety Coordinator for the Town and Municipality of Digby. My role is to educate seniors on crime prevention, home security and personal safety issues like falls prevention. I really enjoy working with seniors in community-it's my passion!

Q. *How did you get involved with the Digby and Area Preventing Falls Together Coalition?*

A. I was volunteering with the VON in Annapolis, and got involved with the Annapolis Coalition. When they started a coalition in Digby Area, I moved over a county!

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

A. This summer, we visited local businesses to encourage them to implement fall-proofing measures. We are also participating in the Municipal Election project. Candidates for the municipal elections have been given information packages to educate them

about seniors and falls. I also write a bi-weekly column for the Digby Courier. My recent column is about falls, and a personal account of a bad fall my grandmother had recently.

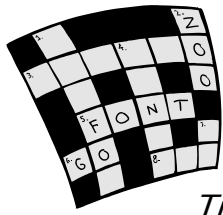
Q. *What are some of the issues you see in your work that relate to falls?*

A. Most falls happen when we are in a hurry or have our arms full. They also happen when we forget to take the time to turn on a light or clear a pathway. Many seniors continue to be over confident doing once simple tasks, when they should really take the time to ask for some help. I also have many clients whose falls are due to misuse of medications.

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

A. I would like to impress upon all seniors the importance of staying in control and becoming informed about safety and crime prevention. Financial abuse and Power of Attorney theft is far more common than we think. Losses are seldom recovered. Be careful what you sign and follow your instincts. Call a Safety Coordinator near you for assistance.

Dawn Thomas is a member of the Digby and Area Preventing Falls Together Coalition and is also on the provincial Advisory Committee for the Preventing Falls Together Program. You can view Dawn's columns, and lots of other great content from Western Nova Scotia newspapers by visiting novanewsnow.com



Prevent Falls Through Mental Fitness

Train Your Brain!

-by Patricia Langille

We all know about the benefits of regular physical activity in preventing falls, but what about mental fitness?.

Research has shown that individuals who exercise their brains are less likely to suffer from mental decline, thereby improving their functional ability and their risk of falling. There are a variety of ways that you can help exercise your brain:

- Memorization has been shown to be beneficial. Try memorizing grocery lists or poems, etc on a regular basis.
- Crossword puzzles and word searches will help keep your brain fit while also increasing your recall ability, helping you to remember words and decreasing the instances of that “tip of my tongue” feeling.
- For an interesting variation, try logic puzzles or Sudoku puzzles, a kind of crossword that uses numbers instead of words.
- Enjoy a variety of games! They can be traditional board or card games, computer games, or video games. If you have grandchildren, this may also be an ideal way to spend some time together.
- If you do not enjoy these traditional puzzles, perhaps some video games or computer programs designed to increase your memory skills would be best

for you. There are a variety of programs available to suit all abilities, tastes and price points.

- At the very least, get out and spend time socializing with others in your community. Talking with others helps stimulate your brain while also providing a number of emotional benefits.

You may also wish to pursue more formal learning opportunities. If there is a university in your local area, contact their continuing education department to investigate what options are available to you. Many universities will offer courses for free, or at a discounted rate. Local recreation departments will often offer courses each season, many especially suited for seniors, which will provide mental stimulation and social interaction with others. You can also check local senior organizations to discover any programs they may be offering, as many groups offer computer courses or more informal learning opportunities.

Whatever methods you choose, remember that keeping your brain fit through regular exercise can improve your quality of life and help you stay healthy and independent.

Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted.

A person who never made a mistake never tried anything new.

Albert Einstein



Notes and Notices

Dementia Care: Making the Links
The Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia is hosting the 19th Provincial Conference October 27 and 28 at the Holiday Inn Harbourview in Dartmouth, NS. Registration materials are now available online: www.alzheimer.ns.ca or (902) 422-7691 or 1-800-611-6345 (outside metro).

Recreation Nova Scotia celebrates its 10th anniversary this year with its Annual Conference and Trade Show from November 5-8 at the Westin in Halifax. For more information visit the Rec NS site at www.recreationns.ns.ca



The NS Chapter of Osteoporosis Canada holds its annual Bone China Tea at Heritage Hall, Pier 21 on November 13th from 1:30 to 4 PM. For tickets and information, contact Jean Murdock at 445-2448 or email Eleanor Hanlon at ellie.hanlon@ns.sympatico.ca

The Senior Property Tax Rebate Program is once again being offered to eligible seniors. Eligible homeowners will receive a 50% rebate on the municipal property taxes paid in the previous year, up to a maximum of \$400.00. Applications must be postmarked by December 31, 2008. To find out more, or to obtain an application, visit your local Access Nova Scotia site, call 1-877-296-9338 (424-

5200 in Metro), or visit their website at: <http://gov.ns.ca/snsmr/rebates/programs/seniors.asp>

Help With Home Heating

The Nova Scotia Government has announced new and improved programs to help with the cost of home heating this winter, and to help Nova Scotians make their homes more energy efficient. For example, The Heating Assistance Rebate Program (HARP) has increased from \$200 to \$450 To find out more, call 1-800-898-7668 or visit www.heatsmart.ca

Proposals are being accepted for the new Rural Partner Development Program, an initiative directed towards projects that augment developmental capacity in rural areas. Deadline for applications is November 30, 2008. For more information contact 1-877-295-7160 or visit the website at: http://rural.gc.ca/programs/prog08_e.phtml

Acadia University is now offering an Elder Planning Counselor Certificate. The course is available through either a 3-day in class session, or by distance through a set of DVD instructor lectures. Upon successful completion of the EPC examination, participants will earn an EPC designation. For more information about the course, visit their website at <http://pd.acadiu.ca> or contact Open Acadia at 1-800-565-6568, pd@acadiu.ca

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