



Community Links

Ageing Well Together

Spring 2014

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Community Links

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Community Links gratefully acknowledges the support of the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness



Living alone

Concerns about social isolation

YOU ARE living alone. Is it bad for your health? Well, it could be, depending on whether you are making it a priority to stay connected to family and friends.

Researchers are not really sure how it works, but they say prolonged feelings of isolation and loneliness can cause hormonal, genetic and other changes that may contribute to the risk of developing health problems. Scientists have discovered that social isolation changes the way the brain works.

Some countries, like Britain, have decided it's a priority

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Got a question? Dial 211!

PEOPLE over 55 make up more than half of those who call the new provincial 211 help line, says Executive Director Mike Myette, at the end of the program’s first year in operation.

The help line offers a personal navigation service for anyone in Nova Scotia 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can call from anywhere in the province for free. Nova Scotia and Ontario are the only provinces that offer the service to all its residents. Overall, 60 per cent of Canadians have access to a 211-style service.

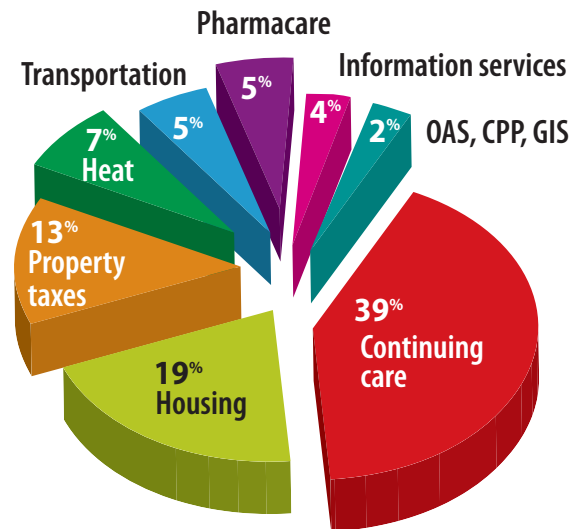
In 2013 the centre received 14,116 calls and 55,000 visits to its website, <http://211.ns.ca>

“Reaching out for help is not something seniors are accustomed to,” says Myette. Fortunately staff are empathetic-- often former social workers or care givers. And they are willing to tackle complex life issues on behalf of their callers.

Take the Cape Breton woman living with cancer in her 70s, with her husband as sole caregiver. She called looking for advice on how to find respite care but during the conversation it became obvious that she really wanted someone to deep-clean the house, says Myette.

This service was not available through the agencies but “we did some digging” and, through Cancer Care NS, found a donor who came up with a \$200 cheque that afternoon.

They’re also good at helping seniors advocate for themselves. When an older man asked for help caring for his wife who had Alzheimer’s, support workers learned that the woman had been denied government care because he had forgotten a critical detail. They coached him through the conversation and the decision was reversed. “We have a lot of



Questions seniors ask: Graph shows the type of questions seniors ask of the 211 service

conversations about conversations,” said Myette.

Not all needs are so complex. Staff have become experts at navigating websites and they will often get callers to start up their computers so they can guide them through the online labyrinth one click at a time. “A real navigator does that,” says Myette.

The centre is becoming aware of the needs of seniors and other groups and has found that one of the greatest needs for seniors is transportation. It seems there are programs to fill almost

every need but seniors can’t always get to them, especially in rural areas.

Before the centre opened Myette and his staff spent 18 months developing a database of 12,000 records of 5000 existing services. They found out about these services by going through about 50 community directories.

Data is reviewed at least once a year to keep it current.

Reaching out for help is not something seniors are accustomed to.

— Mike Myette

Changes to OAS

Effective July 2013, taxpayers may defer receiving Old Age Security benefits for up to five years (until age 70). For every month the pension is deferred, they will receive an additional .6% per month up to a maximum of 36% at age 70. A taxpayer who defers OAS benefits will generally have to live to age 83 to break even.

Who might benefit from this option? Those over 65 who are still working and earning enough salary to be subject to an OAS repayment, which starts at a net annual income of \$70,954.

Who should not choose this option? Most seniors with low to middle range incomes will not benefit from this option. This option is definitely not recommended for anyone who would be eligible for the Guaranteed Income Supplement and the Allowance. You must apply for OAS to receive these.

Do you have to decide at age 65? No, you can apply for OAS benefits retroactively for 11 months after turning 65.

New tax tips

Here are some new federal tax changes and tips that might be useful. Talk to a tax specialist or financial advisor for further information.

Starting for this 2013 tax year, those who file paper returns do not have to include receipts or supporting documents for medical expense claims. They do, however, have to be retained in case the Canada Revenue Agency asks for them later.

First Time Donor Super Credit: If neither you nor your spouse have reported donations on your tax returns for the last five years (2008-2012) you are eligible for a first time donor super credit of an additional 25% on up to \$1000 in cash donations.

Community Volunteer Tax Preparation Program: If your income is less than \$30,000 (single) or \$40,000 (couple) you can get your taxes prepared by CRA approved volunteers. Tax clinics take place at many locations in the province, usually through public libraries. Contact your local library, visit <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/volunteer/> for a list of clinics, or call Community Links toll free at 1-855-253-9355 and we will help you find a location.

Struggling with debt?

A recent Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce survey found that 60% of Canadians are retiring with debt. Since incomes after retirement are often lower, it can be a struggle to deal with the debt along with other living expenses.

If you are struggling with debt after retirement (or before!) there is a Debtor Assistance Program available through Access Nova Scotia. Debtor assistance staff can review your budget and help you choose the best course of action. For more information, call 1-800-670-4357 or visit www.accessns.ca/debtor-assistance.





Living alone

From page 1

to develop some strategies around alleviating loneliness and are mapping the incidences of loneliness across the country in their effort to come up with plans that will help.

Britain is emerging as a leader in addressing social isolation on a population-wide level. It is mapping the incidences of loneliness across the country in order to develop strategies.

Of course, the relationship between loneliness and ill health is more complex than the number of people who sleep under one roof. Being alone doesn't lead to health problems. But when people feel disconnected and cut off from the world, it's a different story. Although living alone may put some individuals at greater risk of experiencing those feelings, research shows that people who live with others can also feel isolated.

A study published last year in the JAMA Internal Medicine journal found people over 60 who felt lonely were more likely to experience functional decline and death than those who weren't, regardless of whether they lived alone. Often, seniors can live in family settings, but still feel alone because they are not included in family meals and celebrations.

"Simply solving the issue by placing people living with others is not going to single-handedly remove the adverse health effects," said Emily Bucholz, a Yale University PhD candidate who co-authored a commentary on

social isolation and health.

One of the biggest challenges in developing comprehensive strategies that help socially isolated people develop meaningful connections is the fact that few people want to talk about it.

"People would far rather have some awful diagnosis than just admit they were lonely," said Jacqueline Olds, clinical professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School who co-authored *The Lonely American: Drifting Apart in the Twenty-First*

Century. "Almost anything would be preferable to saying, 'I'm just as lonely as can be.'"

If governments put a greater focus on the potentially devastating consequences of social isolation, it would be a major step to helping those in need, she said. In the meantime, there are groups working to reach those who would otherwise fall through the cracks.

In British Columbia, the Langley Senior Resources Society has established several programs to encourage seniors to create and maintain social networks. Volunteer drivers are on hand to take seniors shopping or to do home visits with those who aren't comfortable venturing out. They also have a "telephone buddy" system that connects trained senior volunteers with socially isolated

elderly individuals.

The B.C. centre also recently ran a series of

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People would far rather have some awful diagnosis than just admit they are lonely

You may never replace the friends and partners who have died but you can still create new relationships

Living alone

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workshops on “Letting Go of Loneliness.” The workshops focused on helping elderly individuals accept that while they may never replace the lifelong friends and partners who have died, they can still create new relationships. The response to the programs has been overwhelmingly positive, says Janice McTaggart, director of outreach and volunteer services.

“When you have other things to think about and other things to talk about, you don’t dwell on your issues quite as much,” she said. “Lots of people that come to the centre here tell us we saved their lives.”

What does your day look like?

For some seniors, the letter carrier or the favorite day time TV show are the highlights of the day. This can be a form of self isolation – the less you do, the less you want to do. Here are some tips to make your days more fulfilling:

- Don’t wait for friends and family to call you. Invite friends and neighbours over for coffee or out for an outing. Your phone will ring in direct proportion to how often you call others!
- Keeping active is key to mental and physical well-being. Even a short daily walk can lift your spirits and help keep you physically fit.
- Get out of the house –team up with a friend to go to bingo, community theatre, elderobics, or whatever appeals to you. Lost touch with your friends? Join a seniors club and make new ones.

So what will your day look like? It’s really up to you.



Cooking for One

Those of us who live alone don’t have to fall into a ‘tea and toast’ or microwave meal syndrome. Here are some tips for eating well:

- Cook a batch of whole grains such as brown rice or barley and freeze in individual portions using a muffin pan. Once frozen, the discs can be stored in a zip-top freezer bag.
- Separate and freeze single servings of items like home baked or purchased muffins and breads – or brownies and cookies!. Wrap tightly in plastic wrap to prevent freezer burn.
- Visit the bulk bins at your local health food and grocery stores. You can buy exactly what you need with no waste and it’s often less expensive per pound.
- If you’re not able to go food shopping a few days a week embrace frozen produce. Frozen produce can be just as nutritious as fresh and it’s there when you need it. Just choose options without added sauces and sugar.
- Eggs can make a meal happen in a flash, anytime! They are an excellent source of protein and contain a bounty of nutrients. You can hard-boil a few on the weekend to have as an easy breakfast, snack or quick salad addition.
- Buy a whole package of meat or poultry and wrap individual portions in freezer-safe paper; label each with the date and contents.

Source: *The Internet: Marisa Moore, MBA, RDN, LD Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Spokesperson*



The Beatles!

FEBRUARY’S e-bulletin trivia question was what British “invasion” happened 50 years ago? The answer, of course, was The Beatles. February 2014 marked the 50th anniversary of the US arrival of the fab four from Liverpool. At first The Beatles themselves were surprised at the response, and found it hard to believe the reception at JFK Airport was for them:

There were millions of kids at the airport, which nobody had expected. We heard about it in mid-air. There were journalists on the plane, and the pilot had rang ahead and said, ‘Tell the boys there’s a big crowd waiting for them.’ We thought, ‘Wow! God, we have really made it.’

—Paul McCartney

Posters, ticket and a front-page picture from the Beatle’s first visit to Canada in 1964.

Some of our members added their own reminiscences:

I saw them from a window at Manufacturer’s Life offices in Toronto, when I was a wee one!!! Even from 20 floors up I know Paul was waving to me – not the other 200,000 that were there.....Haaa!

—Dolores Mac Gillivray

I was in Grade 6 and remember being so excited that Sunday night watching Ed Sullivan. My father thought they were awful and would never last.

—Linda Dieltgens

All eight of us were gathered around the TV at our home in PEI. We all thought “what funny looking guys— and why is everyone screaming?”

—Valerie Connors

We weren’t allowed TV – only CBC radio. Usually, CBC didn’t play pop music, but I heard clips of the Beatles songs on CBC newscasts in 1962 or ‘63, when they were already a phenomenon in Britain. We only had two TV channels back then, so all the kids at school would be talking about the same programs they saw on the weekend – like the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan show. It was a shared experience even if you didn’t see them on TV.

—Michael Marshall

Crossword answers

ACROSS

- 2 MURRAY
- 3 STANFIELD
- 6 SPACE
- 7 DOOWOP
- 9 SOCIALIZING
- 11 PENSION
- 12 DRIVERSLICENCE
- 13 SMART

DOWN

- 1 GAMBLING
- 3 SENIORSMOMENT
- 4 GRANDCHILDREN
- 5 SPRINGHILL
- 8 BLUENOSE
- 10 EXERCISE

Jane's throwing her weight around



IN MID-MARCH 2014, Jane Warren went to the Canadian Masters Indoor Track and Field Championships in Toronto. This is a competition for athletes 35 years of age and up. Jane competes in the 55-59 age grouping in the weight throw and shot-put events.

Jane has been involved in track and field since her school days. She remembers that girls weren't allowed to compete in certain events back then, like the hammer throw, triple jump or pole vault. Through high school, Jane competed in throwing events like the javelin, shot-put and discus, culminating with

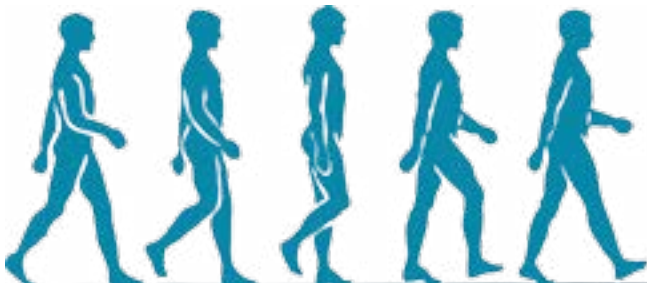


Jane Warren

representation of her province at the National Championships. She continues to actively participate at throws and meets in Port Williams and Truro.

Jane is a firm believer in the idea that keeping fit and active is key to both physical and mental wellbeing. Having experienced a brain injury from a car crash some years ago, she can attest to the benefits of sport to help with recovery and in learning how to manage the neurological difficulties that can result from such an injury. Approximately 1.4 million Canadians experience difficulties as a result of brain injuries. Jane continues to be involved in the Brain Injury Association of Canada and has served as president of the Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia.

One of Jane's more recent interests is in being a volunteer actor in Community Links Seniors and Gambling project. In playing the character of Maggie, who tries to talk to her friend Patsy about a gambling problem, Jane was able to showcase yet another of her talents. For more information about the Seniors and Gambling project, contact Community Links provincial office.



CURE FOR DEPRESSION

Everybody knows exercise combats depression but you don't have to train for an Iron-man race.

Texas researchers have found that people who walk 35 minutes six days a week reduce depression as effectively as Prozac and other antidepressants. Exercising while depressed is difficult, but there are no reported results of people feeling more depressed after a walk.

COMING EVENTS

Our Seniors and Gambling Project continues with drama, conversation, and awareness raising

Upcoming sessions include

April 3 Elmsdale/Enfield Seniors Club 12 p.m.

April 14 Dartmouth Seniors Centre 12 p.m.

April 28 North East Margaree Seniors 2 p.m.

May 1 Liverpool Seniors Activity Group 2 p.m.

May 21 Seaside in Blandford 1:30 p.m.

Contact the provincial office for more information 1-855-253-9355

May 13-14

The 40th Convention of the Federation of Senior Citizens and Pensioners of N.S.
Best Western Plus Glengarry Hotel
Contact Alma Johnston 434-1829

Friday, June 6

Community Links AGM,
Comfort Hotel Bayers Lake

June 13-14

Visit Community Links' Booth at the 50+ Expo
Exhibition Park, Halifax

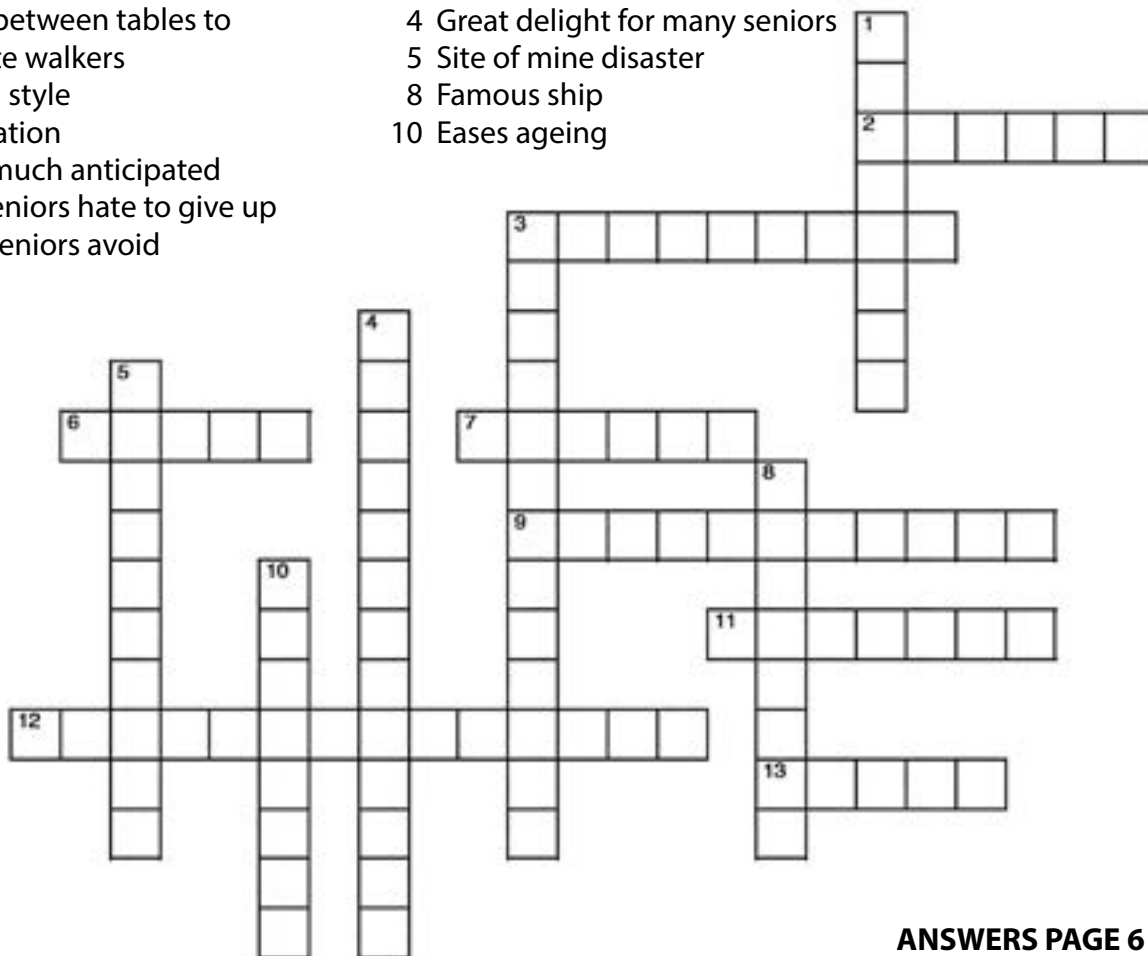
CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 2 Famous Nova Scotia singer Anne ___
- 3 Premier we all remember
- 6 What to put between tables to accommodate walkers
- 7 Popular song style
- 9 Prevents isolation
- 11 Fiscal event much anticipated
- 12 A privilege seniors hate to give up
- 13 Phone type seniors avoid

DOWN

- 1 Habit that can get out of control
- 3 Two words for a well-known condition
- 4 Great delight for many seniors
- 5 Site of mine disaster
- 8 Famous ship
- 10 Eases ageing



ANSWERS PAGE 6

Publications Mail Agreement No. 41266523
Box 29103, Halifax, NS B3L 4T8
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