



# Age-Friendly Action in Niagara Community Articles

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**2010-2013**

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# Preface

This document contains 61 articles written by volunteers around Ontario's Niagara region who were engaged in the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative (2010 to 2013). This Initiative was led by Niagara-wide volunteers, with funding support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Many of these articles were published in partnership with the Niagara This Week newspaper.

This compilation of articles is a resource to:

- spark ideas for Age-Friendly community action around and beyond Niagara;
- serve as a snapshot in time of Age-Friendly activity of importance to the Niagara-wide community; and
- assist people wishing to strengthen planning for Age-Friendly communities.

The articles are sorted according to the 12 Living in Niagara Sectors, which align with the social indicators of health.

**Please note** that contacts, coordinates, and other details in the articles may have changed since the original date of writing.

# Index

	<b>Author</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Section 1 Age-Friendly Communities</b>	Arnold Steed	The Path to Wellness: An Age-Friendly Community Approach	4
	Doug Rapelje	Niagara Age-Friendly Community: An Idea That Matters	5
	District School Board of Niagara Grade 6-8 Students	Caring and a Jar of Honey: Age-Friendly Reflections	6
	Paul Young	Planning an Age-Friendly Community	7
	Verena Menec	Age-Friendly Communities: The Manitoba Experience	8
	Virginia Stewart	Age-Friendly Neighbourhoods?	9
	Wendy Walker	Becoming Age-Friendly Age-Friendly Welland	10 11
<b>Section 2 Arts, Culture &amp; Heritage</b>	Lindsay Dressel	Senior Talent Star	12
<b>Section 3 Belonging, Volunteering, Giving &amp; Leadership</b>	Chelsea Futers & Kathy Procyk	An Age-Friendly Community is an Intergenerational Community	13
	David Siegel	What Do Seniors Want?	14
	Erin Britnell	A Sustainable Community is an Age-Friendly Community	15
	Jenny Shickluna	Niagara Gatekeepers Volunteers: Passion! Action! Impact!	16
	Krista Bowie	Intergenerational Programs Strengthen Community	17
	Lindsay Dressel	Honouring Families in the Community	18
	Steve Cino	"Age-Friendly" the Niagara50Plus Way...	19
	Wendy Sturgeon	Aboriginal Day: A Celebration for All Nations All Ages	20
<b>Section 4 Crime, Safety &amp; Security</b>	Tammy Hollard	Keeping Niagara Age-Friendly Can Be as Easy as Saying Hello	22
<b>Section 5 Environment</b>	Melissa Helwig	Tending the Garden City: A Community for All Ages	23
	Steve Murphy	An Accessible Community is an Age-Friendly Community	24
<b>Section 6 Getting Started</b>	Lori Webster	Age-Friendly Community Making a World of Difference	25
	Sean Keays	Ethnicity, Culture and Language is Important	26

	<b>Author</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Section 7 Health &amp; Wellness</b>	Amanda Hicks	It Truly Takes a Village to Raise a Child	27
	Bunny Alexander	Heroes in the Home: Caregiver Recognition Program	28
		Access to Community Resources are Available	29
	Deb Rollo	Is Your Home Age-Friendly?	30
		Doug Rapelje	Population Aging
		Senior Friendly Hospitals	32
		Hospice Niagara Bereavement Support Programs	33
	Erin McGinns	Living Longer and Living Well	34
		We are All Accountable	35
	Geoff Straw	Be Sure to Dispose of Unused Drugs	36
		Hospice Niagara Bereavement Support Programs	37
	Jim Kershaw	The Future of Home Care	38
		Jody Yurchuk	HIV and Aging
	Lynn McCleary	Senior-Friendly Health Care	40
	Margaret Sanderson	Accessibility at the Heart of Age-Friendly Community	41
		Sean Kaays	Long-Term Care Waitlists are Growing
	Teena Kindt	Living a Healthy Brain Lifestyle	43
Take a Break, An Alzheimer Coffee Break		44	
Virginia Stewart	Beyond Health and Social Services	45	
	A Number or a Mindset?	46	
Wendy Thompson	My Life has Changed 100 Per Cent	47	
<b>Section 8 Housing &amp; Shelter</b>	Alexandra Swigger	Meeting the Housing Needs of Niagara's Seniors	48
	Chris Woodall	Clear Concise Communication	49
		How Not To Pay Rent	50
		Landlords: Read the Fine Print	51
		Tenants: Don't Mix Square Pegs with Round Holes	52
<b>Section 9 Learning &amp; Education</b>	Dick Moore	Learning Cafes	53
	Judy Sobchak	Computers for Seniors	54
	Lindsay Dressel	Laughter for All Ages	55
	Shienna Germain	Computers for Seniors Continued	56
<b>Section 10 Economic Development, Poverty &amp; Prosperity</b>	Doug Rapelje	Consequences of Poverty	57
<b>Section 11 Transportation &amp; Mobility</b>	Harold G. Sawchuk	When We Were Kids...	58
		Jackie Gervais	Buses Needed to Make Niagara Age-Friendly
	Kumar Ranjan	Walkable Communities	60
		Niagara Region Transit Service for All Ages and Abilities	61
	Virginia Stewart	Niagara Region Transit Service for All Ages and Abilities	62
		Everyone is a Pedestrian	63
<b>Section 12 Work &amp; Employment</b>	Jim Kershaw	What is Old is New Again	63
		The Perfect Senior Job	64
		Resigning	65

### The Path to Wellness: An Age-Friendly Community Approach

By: Arnold Steed

2010

It has been a long journey to the opening of the Welland Community Wellness Complex.

The expansion to the Rose City Seniors Activity Centre (RCSAC) had its beginning at a meeting of the Senior's Advisory Board 12 years ago, where we discussed the RSCAC facility that supported a membership of 1400, but was built for only 500. It was obvious we required more space. To explore our future options we invited Doug Rapelje, the former Director, Regional Social Services and Senior Citizens Department to a meeting. He stressed diverse wellness programs and services to keep older adults active and healthy.

We then met with Ralph Belvedere to do a conceptual plan, which we could present to the RSCAC's membership then City Council for consideration. The architect advised us that the building could only be expanded to the rear because the trunk sewer prohibited growth otherwise. As well, any other option would spoil the original historic recreational canal curbside appeal. Our modest price for a therapeutic pool, increased space for snooker and other older adult activities was \$3,000,000.

After considerable debate, our plans were accepted, but due to the downturn in the economy, Mayor Reuter and Council deferred the project. To maintain the momentum in interest the Rose City Seniors Foundation was legally formalized. A few years later and with a new Mayor Cindy Forrester, we reiterated our wishes to Council, who agreed to the benefit of the addition to seniors, but again they deferred the project.

The downturn of economy persisted in Welland, as across Niagara, Ontario and Canada. With the announcement of stimulus funding by the Federal and Provincial Government, under the leadership of George Chipman, we dusted off the plans and submitted a grant to build under Mayor Goulborne. The first submission was rejected. **A new plan that considered all ages, abilities, as well as sport and arts and culture interests was required.** The new price tag at \$9,000,000 was approved.

We now, see the results of 12 years of planning and wishing: an age-friendly community facility.

This article is adapted from Arnold Steed's opening remarks September 20, 2011.

## Niagara Age-Friendly Community: An Idea That Matters

By: Doug Rapelje,

former Director, Niagara Region Social Services and Senior Citizens Department.; Chair, Welland City Senior Citizens Advisory Committee; member of the Age Friendly Community Management Committee

2010

Ideas can start everywhere and anywhere. The idea for Age-Friendly Communities started in June 2005 at the World Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The research protocol implemented by the World Health Organization engaged 33 world cities including four Canadian ones. The World Health Organization then developed a comprehensive set of age-friendly principles and criteria for community leaders and planners to incorporate into their planning processes and approaches to building healthy and vibrant communities.

I became interested in the idea for a Welland Age-Friendly Community when I heard a fascinating presentation on the project while attending a board meeting of the Institute of Ageing. I thought it would be a worthwhile project for my community, but to implement it required leadership and funding to be successful. Learning about the Hamilton Council on Aging and the Province of Manitoba Age-Friendly projects was extremely helpful.

To promote the idea of a Welland Age-Friendly Community project we needed support. The City had just appointed its first Welland Senior Citizens Advisory Committee for which I became Chair. This provided the opportunity to present a Welland Age-Friendly Community project to the committee.

Unanimously supported by the Committee April 10, 2009, the idea received the political support from the City of Welland Council and Regional Council. The next step was to seek funding. Since, the Age-Friendly Community project was being promoted by the Ontario Seniors Secretariat it seemed the Trillium Foundation was the most logical funding source.

However, to launch the project a regionally strategy was necessary. The Niagara Region, City of Welland, Niagara Research and Planning Council, Niagara Community Foundation, Brock University and Welland Senior Citizens Advisory Committee agreed to support our initiative. We were fortunate to have the Rose City Seniors Foundation to come forward as the applicant for this project.

Welland is now the pilot project for a Niagara Age-Friendly Community.

To launch the idea of a Niagara Age-Friendly Community region wide it was important to understand first: what seniors wanted in a Niagara Age-Friendly Community? The results of the policy brief presented by the Niagara Community Observatory October 1, 2009 in Welland with over 150 people in attendance marked the beginning of the Niagara Age-Friendly Project Initiative.

## Caring and a Jar of Honey: Age-Friendly Reflections

By: District School Board of Niagara grade 6-8 student volunteers compiled these reflections as part of the "Give Where You Live" program in affiliation with Start Me Up, Seniors Story-telling project. Students met three times with residents in one of four Niagara Regional Housing, Wellness Supportive Living Program sites in Niagara.

2011

### What will you remember about this experience?

"Just because of the age difference, some may have thought it may be difficult or tough to relate, or make connections with each other. It turned out to be exactly the opposite, everybody seemed to connect instantly"

"It was fun being with different generations of amazing people. I definitely want to come back to volunteer."

"I feel that despite that times were different back then to how they are now, it's the feelings and greatest memories that we can truly and really relate to."

"I was nervous at first, I didn't know how it was going to go, but I found that I had a lot in common with the older people."

"Even though they didn't have all of the technology, they still had an awesome life."

### What makes an community age-friendly?

"Caring and a Jar of Honey... put into more detail... a place or environment where people are caring and sweet to one another. Where everybody is treated as equals, at every age, a safe community, a small community, where everyone knows who everybody is, not just their name, but their personalities."

"Everyone coming together and sharing their opinion. A lot more work would get done and tons of voices would get heard."

?"Everyone would be treated with respect and nobody would be making fun of each other."

"I imagine younger volunteers, easier access to things for people who are disadvantaged, people of different generations interacting and taking more time for each other."

"Everyone would try and volunteer and help out as much as they can."

"More accessible parks and trails for the elderly to walk in and so that kids and teenagers can have a place to play/hangout."

"The town would need acceptance towards the different ages."

## Planning an Age-Friendly Community

By: Paul Young, Planner and Landscape Architect with Public Space Workshop

2011

We often hear messages telling us to "get more exercise, go for a walk." But, when we step outside our door we often find there are no sidewalks, cars threaten our the safety and there may be nothing to walk to. Why is it so hard to get around without a car?

The answer can be found in your municipality's Official Plan, a collection of policies, guidelines and maps providing directions for how a municipality will grow. Subdivisions, shopping areas, parks and streets.

An opportunity to make change emerges every five years when the provincial government requires your municipality to update its Official Plan so it reflects new priorities. The rapid decline in rates of walking and cycling has lead to rising levels of diabetes and other chronic diseases related to inactivity.

Sprawling, low-density development has lead to traffic congestion, long distances between housing, shopping, school and work and it has resulted in an all-around decline in walking, cycling, air quality and overall health. People have become increasingly car-dependant.

Healthy Living Niagara (HLN) is now working with municipal planners and road engineers to ensure that the new Official Plans support walking, cycling and accessibility, and ultimately health over the lifespan. The Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative shares the same concerns as HLN and are working directly with community leaders with the aim of ensuring an enabling and supportive environment for residents of all ages. We are now looking to the older parts of town for inspiration. These areas often have a walkable main street, apartments over shops, sidewalks, trees, short blocks, benches and sometimes transit. In short, they are more walkable and support health. Planners are also re-thinking how we design our roads so they can become "complete streets" to support all road users. Combining complete streets with complete communities can help people stay active, healthy and independent. Example community walking and bicycling policies can be found at [www.healthylivingniagara.com](http://www.healthylivingniagara.com)



## Age-Friendly Communities: The Manitoba Experience

By: Dr. Verena Menec,

Principal investigator of the Age-Friendly Communities CURA; Canada Research Chair in Healthy Aging

2011

Manitoba has been actively involved in helping communities become age-friendly since 2006, the year that the World Health Organization introduced the concept of age-friendly communities. Thirty-five cities around the world participated in a project that asked seniors to identify what makes their city age-friendly.

Because many seniors live in rural and remote areas, a similar Canadian project occurred shortly after that looked at the unique needs and challenges of older adults in smaller communities. The lakeside community of Gimli, just north of Winnipeg, participated in this Canadian project. As the Director, Centre on Aging, University of Manitoba, I led the age-friendly research in these communities.

In 2008, the Manitoba government launched the Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative. Communities throughout Manitoba have been invited to participate. Since its launch, 72 communities are working toward becoming more age-friendly. Helping Manitoba communities become age-friendly is a joint effort based on partnerships. The Age-Friendly Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) is a five-year research grant by a national granting agency, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Working closely with the provincial government and community organizations, the CURA team is conducting research in the area of age-friendly communities as a way of helping communities throughout the province become more age-friendly.

Over 50 communities throughout Manitoba have participated in an organized community meeting that is facilitated by CURA staff to help them look at ways to become more age-friendly, and close to 1300 community residents have completed an age-friendly survey. Some of the major priorities that have been identified include creating enough affordable housing for seniors, fixing sidewalk and streets to make them safer for seniors to walk; and having enough recreation activities for seniors in the community.

New resources are continually being developed in Manitoba to assist communities, such as a provincial website ([www.agefriendlymanitoba.ca](http://www.agefriendlymanitoba.ca)) and Community Resource Team. With this combination of age-friendly research and community development work, Manitoba is making strides in supporting seniors to lead active, independent lives.

## Age-Friendly Neighbourhoods?

By: Virginia Stewart,

MA, Former Community Coordinator, Niagara's Age-Friendly Community project (2010-2013), Advocate for walkable communities

2010

Since my appointment to the Niagara Age-Friendly Community (AFC) Initiative Project in January 2011, walking has emerged as a main topic of conversation. Everyone has a story that culminates into a question. Where can I go for a walk in the winter, other than the mall or my condominium parking lot? The Doctor never shovels her sidewalk! Why not, I have to shovel my walk? Why is there no sidewalk in my neighbourhood? Why are people walking on the road? Why are the sidewalks not wide enough for me to walk with my grandchildren? Who can help me clear the snow from my sidewalk? Why does one sidewalk not connect to the next?

An Age-Friendly Community is about Active Aging. It is about finding the answers to your complex questions. Jane's Walk helps bridge the gap. It is a way to have a walking conversation, while exploring the answers to your questions. Jane's Walk is a resourceful street level conversation encouraging civic leadership to ensure the physical environment is inclusive, i.e., building and maintaining sidewalks for children, older persons, and people of all ages to walk. The conversation can also explore the answer to the question where can I get the best cup of coffee in my neighbourhood.

Jane's Walk is new to Niagara. In other communities, it is evolving into a free hybrid walking tour-urban exploration-neighbourhood festival. Elizabeth Chitty is the first to bring Jane's Walk to St.Catharines, "We're just getting ready for this year's event and encourage you to get in touch with us to pitch in, lead a walk, become a volunteer or just cheer us on. For more information contact me via the Jane's Walk website as the St. Catharines contact, [www.janeswalk.net](http://www.janeswalk.net)."

You too can bring Jane's Walk to your Niagara neighbourhood! All walks are given and taken for free. It simply involves planning a route, thinking through the stories, places and people you want to get answers from to your questions. You decide what is important. Invite the mayor, city councilor, a civil engineer, or town planner to listen to your stories and engage in a community conversation to get answers to your sidewalk questions. Invite a history buff to get answers to your heritage questions. Invite a senior to learn more about walkability in your neighbourhood from their perspective.

Who is Jane? Jane is someone who had the age-friendly idea that our communities "have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody," Jane Jacobs (1961). Want more information about Jane herself or Jane's Walk email visit, [www.janeswalk.net](http://www.janeswalk.net), [info@janeswalk.net](mailto:info@janeswalk.net), or phone (416) 642-5779.

## Becoming Age-Friendly

By: Virginia Stewart,

MA, Former Community Coordinator, Niagara's Age-Friendly Community project (2010-2013), Advocate for walkable communities

2013

Over 100 participants shared their experiences through a series of age-friendly roundtable discussions. Citizens, caregivers and service providers from twelve communities collaborated, ranging from the larger Niagara cities, such as St. Catharines to smaller towns, such as Pelham. Their opinions are captured in a report released at a recent Niagara Age-Friendly Community forum.

Most participants called for cleaner parks and outdoor spaces, better sidewalks, intergenerational activities and taxi services that are affordable; improvements that benefit all ages.

Numerous suggestions focused on improved accessibility. Examples of this include priority parking for those with special needs, accessible transportation and ramps into buildings for scooters and wheelchairs. "Print size is too tiny," one older adult remarked.

The reality is that 1 in 7 people have a disability and this statistic will soon shift to 1 in 3 as a result of a growing aging population. Progress is being made with the hard work of Niagara's Municipal Accessibility committees and the private and voluntary agency improvements under the Accessibility of Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Affordable housing was also a main issue among the participants. "It is hard to find a retirement facility under \$2000 a month," stated one participant. There is a disparity with those on low incomes already using food bank and Salvation Army services.

Other suggestions from participants included increased seating areas, i.e., at bus stops, and that events should be held at convenient times. Another suggestion is that there should be more flexible volunteer options and that government and volunteer agencies need to offer better overall and streamlined information.

All of these issues are very similar themes to what is suggested in the World Health Organization Checklist of Essential Features of Age-Friendly Communities. These issues need action to strengthen Niagara's age-friendliness. A copy of the full report of roundtable conversations is available at Niagara Connects.

## Age-Friendly Welland

By: Wendy Walker,  
Vice-Chair, Local Action Committee

2011

The Welland Age-Friendly Local Action Committee was formed in June 2010 with the support of the Niagara-Age-Friendly Community Initiative resource team. The Committee is made up of persons representing the City of Welland, Niagara Regional Police, Mayor's Senior Advisory Council, Wellness Complex Foundation, Mayor's Youth Advisory Council, local residents, Francophone community, Accessibility Committee and Community Service agencies. Funding for the support of our project is through a three-year Ontario Trillium Foundation grant. Work on Niagara Age-Friendly Communities Initiative started in Welland and during this three-year period will be expanded to all other communities in Niagara.

At the local level, it has been a busy and successful year. A number of community forums have been held with many residents participating and making suggestions to increase 'age-friendliness' within our city. We are excited to report that two of our resident's suggestions are being implemented: more seating beside the City of Welland Waterway (Canal) and larger street signs. More seating will benefit persons who enjoy walking along our beautiful recreational waterway. With the assistance and co-operation of the Welland Recreational Canal Corporation (WRCC) and the City of Welland staff 32 benches owned by the WRCC will be installed. The suggestion that street signs be easier to read and have larger print will be gradually implemented by the City as our street signs need to be replaced. There are many other suggestions from Welland residents that we are currently working on as part of our Age-Friendly Local Action Plan.

Members of the Welland Age-Friendly Local Action Committee had the opportunity to speak to many Welland residents at the recent Seniors' Fair held at our new Community Wellness Complex. A number of suggestions were received, thank you. Your input is important to us, in our efforts to make Welland more age-friendly not just for seniors, but for all age groups.

### Senior Talent Star

By: Lindsay Dressel,  
Community Relations Manager, Willoughby Manor Retirement Residence, Niagara Falls

2011

Life Enrichment: Arts, Culture and Recreation are important dimensions of an Age-Friendly Community. Willoughby Manor and Chateau Gardens are excited to be hosting a local audition for Senior Star, Canada's largest talent competition dedicated to seniors.

The musical instrument and singing competition is open to all Canadian residents 65 years and over. All seniors are invited to attend and enjoy the entertainment and refreshments that will be provided throughout the competition. The event takes place on June 16th 2011, and will be held at the Niagara United Mennonite Church on 1775 Niagara Stone Rd. RR2 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

"Chartwell's Senior Star has grown to be the largest celebration of seniors' talent in Canada" adds Brent Binions, President and CEO of Chartwell Seniors Housing REIT. "We are proud to support the incredible talent of Canadian seniors and continue to be amazed and entertained year after year by the caliber of performers who participate."

This isn't just a talent show; it's a celebration of seniors.

During the Regional Competitions, contestants are given a maximum of five minutes to sing a song, to play an instrument, or to do both while their performance is videotaped. Musical accompaniment is provided to singing contestants if required. This year's judging panel includes Anne Dorland; part of Lundy's Lane Choir, Brad Boland; a musical entertainer, and Dianne Nyland; an actress known for her role in the TV show Trouble with Tracey. The judges will choose the top three local contestants. Once selected, they will receive a Senior Star trophy.

Videos of the first and second place winners from across Canada are then submitted to a celebrity panel of judges including Dan Clancy, Tim Louis and Gordie Tapp who will narrow the list down to nine competitors invited to compete in the Senior Star National Final. The National Final will be held in Niagara Falls on Monday, November 28th, 2011.

Pick up your registration form before the curtain rises and ensure your role in this exciting event! Registration forms can be obtained at Willoughby Manor by calling Lindsay Dressel at 905-295-6288.

### **An Age-Friendly Community is an Intergenerational Community**

By: Chelsea Futers and Kathy Procyk,  
part-time Niagara Public Health high-school employees

2012

A healthier, happier Niagara engages citizens of all ages. Achieving a comfortable environment for everyone from youth to older adults should be the ideal goal of Niagara Age-Friendly. However, the term 'Age Friendly Community' is often interpreted as engaging elderly citizens in society. The same concept should also apply to us, Niagara's Youth, as so many young people can feel disconnected from their community.

Giving all age groups the chance to enjoy and contribute ideas to their community eliminates the noticeable social divide between generations. Without this divide, citizens from all age groups can work together, learning from each other while forming useful contacts, and developing a better understanding of one another. People of all ages need places to go where they feel safe, engaged, and are able to expand their social circle. Research says that youth who are engaged in their communities are less likely to become involved in risky behaviours, e.g., drug use, binge drinking and unprotected sex, which negatively affect adolescents and families.

Age-Friendly should engage young people by giving them an opportunity to have a say in their community. We have much to offer in terms of creativity, problem-solving, planning and leading events, mentoring younger children, accessing technology and putting a vast amount of energy into every task. We can be so much more than token youth at the table if you just ask us.

A healthier community allows youth to provide meaningful contributions and feel like their opinions are valued. By the same token, people of all ages must be willing to engage themselves in the community. Take advantage of the opportunities provided in your community, go to social events, and use your voice.

Age friendly is achieved by treating everyone equally; recognizing everyone has something to give. It's important for us, the Niagara Youth. The next time there is a project or an event that targets youth, find some youth, ask their opinion to make sure your project is on the right track. You'll be glad you did.

## What Do Seniors Want?

By: David Siegel,

Professor of Political Science and Director of the Niagara Community Observatory, Brock University

2011

Senior citizens are a large and important group in our local community. So in 2009, the Niagara Community Observatory decided to write a policy brief about the role that seniors play and some of the issues facing them. The Niagara Community Observatory is a research institute of Brock University with a mandate to foster, produce and disseminate research related to the Niagara area. Residents 65 and older account for over 15% of the population in Niagara. That gives the Niagara area the fourth largest concentration of seniors in Canada.

### How do seniors contribute to their community?

Seniors are in a position to make real contributions to their community. Almost 40% of seniors volunteer their time in some way. They also donate more than other age groups to charities. Many seniors are active in community, social or political groups. After retirement, seniors don't go quietly into the night. Many are transitioning into retirement by continuing to work on a part-time basis for their employers or by becoming senior-preneurs-starting their own small businesses.

### What do seniors want?

In our research we found that what seniors want is not particularly different from what others in the community want, with just a few special twists.

- Community engagement - a chance to be consulted and participate in their community in a meaningful way
- Independence - transportation and other services that allow them to be independent as long as possible
- Sound economic, social, and physical planning that helps them access needed services easily
- Consumer-focused health care services - seniors frequently need specialized kinds of treatment that are not always recognized
- Recreation facilities geared to the interests and abilities of seniors
- Libraries and other low-cost services - to keep them active in the community longer
- Open spaces and accessible buildings - physical spaces that recognize the physical, visual, and hearing impairments that sometimes come with age
- Alternative methods of communications - recognition that seniors can have special visual, hearing, and limited range of motion needs
- Safe communities - mobility and other issues can make seniors feel especially vulnerable to accidents and crime

Does it seem surprising that many of the so-called special needs of seniors will also help to serve all members of the community better?

## **A Sustainable Community is An Age-Friendly Community**

By: Erin Britnell,

Coordinator, Community and Corporate Initiatives, Integrated Community Planning Department  
for the Niagara Region

2012

The Sustainable Niagara plan includes eight goal areas and 13 priority actions intended to move Niagara towards its vision for Niagara in 2060. The principles of an Age Friendly Community are respect and support for all citizens, access and inclusion for all, community engagement in decision making, livability and accountability. These principles can also be found in the Sustainable Niagara plan in the goal areas of the Built Environment, Governance, and Culture, Learning and Social Development.

The Sustainable Niagara Plan by definition is a community plan, developed through various methods of community engagement over the past two years. In order to successfully implement the Plan, community organizations and individuals will need to work together, each making the contributions that they are able to make Niagara more sustainable. Currently, you can make that commitment online, <http://www.niagararegion.ca/government/planning/sustainability/commitment-form.aspx> by filling out a quick and easy online form, or by contacting Erin Britnell at the Region to get a paper copy.

Some of the actions that have been included in the Sustainable Niagara Plan include Continuing the Regional Transportation Strategy, Creating a Niagara Collaborative, Strengthening Education for a Sustainable Future and Complete Streets, which all contribute to making Niagara more accessible, inclusive, and provide opportunities for residents to engage with each other and in decision making processes.

A sustainable community should be an age friendly community and vice versa, as both aim to ensure Niagara is a place that "all residents are proud to call 'home'; a Niagara that is the envy of communities worldwide; a Niagara that is compassionate, connected and committed to a quality of life that is meaningful and realistic; a Niagara that works together to fulfill the potential of its residents".



## Niagara Gatekeepers Volunteers: Passion! Action! Impact!

By: Jenny Shickluna,

Community Support Services Supervisor, Niagara Region Seniors Community Programs

2011

National Volunteer Week April 10-16 is an opportunity to celebrate the incredible volunteers in our community. Niagara Gatekeepers volunteers embrace making Niagara Age-Friendly as an important task. They aim to create awareness and enable the community to be engaged in the support of our citizens, one of the principles and building blocks of Age-Friendly Communities. Angie Rotella and the other volunteers in this program play an important role in ensuring that this initiative is accessible and inclusive of all of our citizens, another important Age-Friendly principle.

Angie has been a dedicated volunteer since the age of 18 years old. Her first volunteer experience was with TELEFRIEND, a 24-hour crisis telephone service. She continued to give back during those early years when she mentored a young, troubled boy through the Volunteer Bureau.

Today, Angie's dedication to giving back to her community continues. She currently assists the Niagara Gatekeepers Program, which helps members of the community learn to identify the signs of a senior who may require support to ensure their safety and wellbeing. For Angie, the program is near and dear to her heart.

The Niagara Gatekeeper Program, which is a part of Niagara Region Seniors Community Programs, is a collaborative with the Community Care Access Centre, Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region, and Niagara Region Community Mental Health. Niagara Gatekeepers operates a phone line from 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. to take calls from community members who want to refer a senior who they are concerned about. This free program ensures a visit from a community worker who will connect the senior with programs and services that will support them to remain safe and independent in the community.

This "organization's mission is one that I can relate to and one which I feel serves a much needed and useful purpose, especially with the aging population (I am a baby boomer)," said Angie. "I also like the idea that the organization attempts to facilitate seniors remaining at home as long as possible and that help is not foisted on them if they don't want it."

Since joining the Gatekeepers Program, Angie has gained a lot from her experiences. "I enjoy interacting with people and this volunteer position allows me to do that." Perhaps the greatest impact has been, knowing she has helped someone, "I get an extreme sense of satisfaction knowing that I may have helped someone and made a difference in someone's life."

Niagara Gatekeepers free referral line is open from 8:30 am to 8:30 pm (905) 684-0968.

## Intergenerational Programs Strengthen Community

By: Krista Bowie,

Community Recreation Coordinator, P.A.R.C.S. Services for the Corporation of the City of Welland

2011

As seniors are expecting to live longer, they are looking for ways that they can stay active. One exciting way for them to stay meaningfully engaged in their community is to participate in activities that bring seniors and children together for a mutual benefit. This used to be a common part of our culture; but as families have moved farther apart we have a lost this important connection. The City of Welland Parks Arts Recreation Community Development and Sports (P.A.R.C.S.) Services department embraces an age-friendly Niagara by promoting intergenerational activities.

The old and the young are two groups with much in common; they have time on their hands, they are at times under-appreciated, and they have a lot to offer one-another. Involvement in intergenerational activities contributes to their mental, physical and emotional well-being and helps to dispel inaccurate stereotypes.

The Rose City Seniors Activity Centre has taken part in a variety of intergenerational programs, offering help and support which one of the building blocks of an age-friendly community. Richard Morwald, Manager of Leisure Services for the City of Welland developed an intergenerational computer literacy program for his Masters of Education. This program was originally developed because members of the Rose City Seniors Activity Centre had expressed a keen desire to learn basic computer skills. In addition, the P.A.R.C.S. department was interested in developing volunteer opportunities for youth and both generations benefitted. Seniors were pleased to have the opportunity to learn new technology and to foster friendships with youth. The younger people enjoyed enhanced communication skills, problem solving and an overall appreciation for the contributions that seniors make in their community.

With the opening of the new Welland Community Wellness Complex this fall, we are looking to expand this program. We will include opportunities for seniors to connect through social media. Our intergenerational programming will continue to reinforce cooperation and a sense of community for both young and old. If you have suggestions, or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact the Community Recreation Coordinator at 905-735-1700 ext. 2316.

## Honouring Families in the Community

By: Lindsay Dressel,

Community Relations Manager, Willoughby Manor Retirement Residence, Niagara Falls

2011

Residents of Willoughby Manor, a retirement home in the Village of Chippawa were excited to partake in one-hundred year old resident Dorothy Ives' street re-naming ceremony that took place on July 7th 2011. The re-naming of a street to Ives Gateway (formerly Nordic Gate) recognized Dorothy and her late husband's extensive contribution to making their community age-friendly.

Dorothy's three sons shared stories at the ceremony about how engaged their parents were in community life. Their mother, popularly known as "Aunt Dot", is fondly remembered for driving them and their friends to hockey and sports games. She was the "mother hen" to all the teams.

Their father, James William Ives was actively engaged in local decision-making serving as the Deputy Reeve. As a council member, he established the support needed to see the construction of the local arena built in 1975 to meet the recreation needs for many generations. He is also remembered for the up-keep of the community outdoor rink that required the three sons Donald, James and William to remove the snow every Friday evening ready for Saturday morning games. The service station Ives Garage was also familiar to everyone locally.

The celebration was attended by Kim Craitor MPP of Niagara Falls, Wayne Thomson city council member, Shirley Fisher, and Dorothy's family and her friends from Willoughby Manor. Everyone was happy to see that there is now a street named after a family dedicated to creating an age-friendly community that people are proud to call home.

## "AGE FRIENDLY" the Niagara50Plus way...

By: Steve Cino,  
partner in the Niagara50plus initiative

2010

We are witnessing the emergence of a new life-stage between midlife and old age. This new stage is typically characterized by adults who are over 50 that are in good health, that have financial stability, and that are engaged in an active lifestyle.

Buzz words like "Zoomer", the New Age Tsunami and "Encore Careers" have emerged to capture the spirit of this lifestyle and the options of millions of Baby Boomers will soon be exploring.

Critical to this reality is an emerging movement to expand the civic engagement of older adults. Civic engagement describes how active citizens participate in the life of their community to help shape its future. Older volunteers have always been the backbone of the charitable sector and research validates that their involvement enriches the community and contributes to their sense of self worth, overall good health, and social connections. Today, Canada possesses the fastest growing, best educated and most vigorous population of older adults in the history of its country. The wisdom, experience, talents, and skills of these older Canadians can revamp the face of volunteerism.

The biggest challenge that charities are facing today is to effectively recruit, mobilize and organize this non-traditional, highly skilled group of volunteers. The gap exists between the potential impact of this wave of motivated, civic-minded people and the ability of charities to include project and skill based opportunities to capture these untapped resources.

"I am engaged when I see a vision become a reality, and when I have made a difference that helped my community."

"I am valued for my talents not my age."

These are the passions that the Niagara50Plus initiative seeks to harness. We are a "Champions Group" focused on linking experience and opportunity; being a catalyst for engaging those in this "encore phase" of life to give back to their community, as well as assisting organizations in Niagara that want to tap into this vital resource.

Visit [www.niagara50plus.ca](http://www.niagara50plus.ca) to get involved and make a difference in Niagara.

## Aboriginal Day: A Celebration for All Nations All Ages

By: Wendy Sturgeon,

Executive Director of Niagara Chapter-Native Women Inc., [www.ncnw.net](http://www.ncnw.net)

Wendy Sturgeon is of Ojibwa and British descent, of the Turtle Clan and has been an employee and volunteer within the local urban Aboriginal community for many years. She is also a writer and visual artist.

2011

An Age-Friendly Community is about access and inclusion: yet, many Canadians have a mixed bag of conflicting information and knowledge of the factual history of our beautiful people and of this great land, Canada. National Aboriginal Day takes place on June 21st and allows for the entire country to take some time to reflect upon our shared history as well as our future. It provides a positive time to come to together as one united nation, where we can learn from one another and share as well as experience the ideal that was the original hope of all of our ancestors - a community of friendship based on equality and respect, an age-friendly principle.

We are a community that engages all ages from our children, to our elders in decision-making for our future. We reflect on the personal, social systems and connectedness, as we all open up to new ways of moving forward and paving new healthy trails with respect, encouragement and a shared vision of well being for all our relations and our Mother Earth.

I encourage all of you to take the time this Aboriginal Day to seek out information about our local Native organizations. Engaging yourself will help inform you about the work we do which includes:

- Two native housing corporations.
- A native Diabetes Association.
- Two friendship centers affiliated with Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centers
- A native art organization
- A women's transitional housing service
- A local chapter of the Ontario Native Women Association
- An Aboriginal Head Start program
- A full time child care center

Here in Niagara, there have been many Aboriginal Day Activities and Celebrations however currently for some organizations, it has become a day when they can step away as workers and staff, to reflect and have time with family and friends to re-charge, or participate in events elsewhere. We invite you to enjoy, dance, eat and share in our rich history and culture at one of the following events.

**Six Nations of the Grand River, June 21\***, 8th Annual Aboriginal Day event Chiefswood Tent & Trailer Park

**Hamilton, June 17 - 19, 21st** \*City Hall National Aboriginal Day Celebrations Pow Wow, Food, Booths, <http://www.hedac-aboriginal.com>

**Ottawa, June 17 - 19\***, Summer Solstice Aboriginal Arts Festival in Honor of Aboriginal Day, <http://nadottawa.ca/index.html>

**Toronto, June 25\***, Na-Me-Res Annual Traditional Pow Wow in Celebration of National Aboriginal Day, <http://www.nameres.org/downloads/NMRAnnualTraditionalPowWowAnnouncement.pdf>

**Kitchener, June 25 - 26\***, National Aboriginal Day Celebration "Honoring Our Future Leaders," <http://www.anishnabegoutreach.org/images/stories/nadflyer.pdf>

**\*Dates no longer current.**

### Keeping Niagara Age-Friendly Can Be as Easy as Saying Hello

By: Tammy Hollard,

Senior Support/Vulnerable Adult Coordinator for the Niagara Regional Police Service

2011

The Niagara region has always been a safe community to raise your family and to those from outside the area to visit. It is now home to a new group, active seniors. We are aware that with the changes in the physical ability of seniors, that activities must continue but be modified and that the community centres, whether for the over 50 crowd or not, must offer modified activities for all ages and abilities.

Did you know that there are many senior centres that invite residences that are 50 and better to join with friends? These places offer activities that keep the heart, body, and mind active. Why not take a drive out to Port Colborne, which is designated as Canada's 56th "Safe Community". While there, stop by the Friends Over 55 Community Centre, 554 Fielden Avenue and have a chat with Jack O'Neil at 905-835-1731. He is what being an active senior is all about. His work at the Centre is geared to getting seniors involved and informed. Jack is a great resource and one of my community partners.

My position enables me to help make Niagara age-friendly by partnering with people like Jack to provide information sessions to answer any questions you may have regarding safeguarding your property, money and helping you find all the outlets available to assist and to entertain you while keeping you safe. I can also enlighten you about fraudsters, and cons and how you can avoid them. In addition, I can help you educate your family on ways to make things easier for you and themselves.

Seniors are the keepers of our past. They shape the way we live and grow in our society. Keeping Niagara age-friendly can be as easy as saying hello to a senior as you pass on the street. Everyone needs a smile!

## Tending the Garden City: A Community for All Ages

By: Melissa Hellwig,

Corporate Planning Officer, City of St Catharines

2011

We all want to believe our years have counted for something - that we have left behind some kind of legacy.

How might the legacy of today's large and vibrant aging population impact environmental and social health in years ahead?

During 2010 and 2011 over 400 residents, businesses and groups in St Catharines participated in a study titled "Tending the Garden City - The City of St Catharines Sustainability Strategy". It is a plan municipalities give the Federal government in exchange for funding social and environmental projects like water treatment or transit. It looks at long-term community challenges and how we might solve them.

Addressing all ages, it highlights how we can all play a more strategic role in City Planning.

There are six major pressures facing St Catharine residents - rising energy prices, global economic competition, climate change, poverty, a shortage of natural assets and crumbling infrastructure. These pressures are increasing rapidly - basically we've been living the "Golden Age" a little too hard. We satisfy our personal consumption desires and hope we can give our grandkids the same standards.

In our hearts we know this is impossible, and thus we have begun the shift. At the household level we are beginning to can our produce again. We are building community vitality via Facebook. Governments are replacing coal-fired and nuclear power stations with solar, geothermal and wind energy.

The legacy older adults give us now is their knowledge of simple, sustainable living. We need them to help us learn the importance of many skills we have lost.

The ten municipal priorities identified include many aspects that older adults can readily supply input towards - building community engagement, making our buildings more efficient, conserving water and maintaining our assets, as sound principles of an age-friendly community. Our elder's knowledge can provide a window to a future in which our human and natural resources are used wisely.



## **An Accessible Community is an Age-Friendly Community**

By: Steve Murphy,

Age-Friendly Coordinator and the Accessibility Advisory Coordinator, Niagara Region

2012

The world is watching!

Since the recent release of the Ontario's Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) Ontario has gotten the attention of the rest of the world. Ontario is first to mandate training on Accessibility Standards for Public, Private and Not for Profit sectors. The world is anxious to see how we do.

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act outlines the expectations of how we accommodate those members of our communities with disabilities in the areas of Customer Service, Employment, Information and Communication, Transportation and the Built Environment. The benefits of this legislation are compounded in the realization that for the Niagara Region, like the rest of the province 15.5% of our population is persons with disabilities. Add to this the fact we in the Niagara Region have the 3rd oldest population in Canada and we have a number of people, like my 86-year old-father with his glasses, hearing aids and bad knees who doesn't consider himself disabled, just getting older.

This realization means that we really don't know how many members of our community require an accommodation of some sort in order to be a member of our community and participate and enjoy their citizenry. The good point is that what we do for a particular group in this area benefits everyone. Picture for a moment a flight of stairs, no ramp, no elevator, a young parent pushing a stroller and a person in a wheelchair at the bottom of the stairs are in the same position, "can't get up there from here".

Imagine also your restaurant offering a menu in a larger print, no extra cost, just more customers feeling like you want their business.

As a tourist / vacation/ conference destination it makes sense to make it as easy for people to come, do business, vacation and enjoy what Niagara has to offer as easy as possible. An accessible community is an Age Friendly community.

### Age-Friendly Community Making a World of Difference

By: Lori Webster, Community Connections Co-ordinator,  
Welland Heritage Council & Multicultural Centre

2010

The Age-Friendly Community initiative that is sweeping through Niagara is a positive trend that changes our focus from "me" to "we". One important aspect of this initiative is its emphasis on social inclusion and participation.

Another notable trend across Niagara is the number of newcomers to Canada that have been arriving from many nations. It is appropriate to focus on ways to facilitate their social inclusion and participation as we celebrate this Diversity Month of June.

It takes the help of people like you to create a welcoming community for newcomers who are making Niagara their new home. Some are arriving because they have chosen and been accepted to come to this land, while others may have had to flee their countries and have been accepted to stay in Canada after having their basic rights and freedoms threatened. Regardless of each person's story, a welcoming community will help newcomers make Niagara their home. Doing so allows for newcomers to connect with people and places and to be able to share the gifts and talents they bring.

Community Connections for Newcomers is a Citizenship and Immigration funded program that exists across our region to serve as a bridge that brings newcomers together with the community. One way that Community Connections for Newcomers does this is by matching Canadian volunteers with newcomers to connect for an hour, once a week for the purposes of English or French conversation help or cultural exchange. Individuals or families can volunteer, and matches are based on shared characteristics such as gender, age, career interest, or hobbies.

Community Connections for Newcomers also supports Age-Friendly Community initiatives by offering a variety of group activities that introduce newcomers to people and places in the community thanks to community partnerships. Conversation cafés, international cooking demonstrations, workshops, sports, youth groups for youth age 14-24, and seniors groups also meet regularly to break out of the isolation that newcomer seniors report experiencing.

Opportunities for community connection and social inclusion exist for newcomers of all ages and volunteers are needed and invited to facilitate any of these activities. By creating a welcoming community for newcomers to Canada, and helping them to participate in our community, the physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being of everyone is promoted, contributing to the goal of age-friendly communities. Contact a local multicultural centre today located in Fort Erie, Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, or Welland, to be part of our Age-Friendly Community, making a world of difference!

## Ethnicity, Culture and Language is Important

By: Sean Keays,  
MA Gerontology, CAO, Foyer Richelieu Welland

2012

Families are facing increased pressure to provide care to their chronically ill kin in the home. Every week I have five or six people call me wanting to learn how they can get their spouse or parent into Foyer Richelieu, Welland. Cultural factors and empowerment of autonomy enhance quality of life and experience of care giving. We at the Foyer Richelieu stress the importance of resident autonomy in the provision of good quality care and cultural identity by providing our services in a francophone environment because resident autonomy is linked to better resident well being, less reliance on supportive services, and greater participation in social activities. This is especially true when services are offered in the resident's first language.

We notice the residents feel very much at home at the Foyer Richelieu, as they are with former neighbours, colleagues, family and friends who fill our home with life and enthusiasm. We are blessed to have amazing staff and volunteers who play an important role in enhancing the resident's quality of life by doing it in French. Moreover, like many other linguistic groups, francophones enjoy a good celebration. I receive complements that our traditional annual events remind them of their high school reunions; a complement that shows that we are providing community wellness beyond resident care giving.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care recognizes the importance of facilitating access to French-language health services for members of Francophone communities across Ontario. Per capita, Niagara has one of the highest percentages of French speaking residents in Southern Ontario. Improved access to French-language health services requires concerted efforts by all major stakeholders groups: Local Health Integration Networks, health service providers, health care professionals, political decision-makers, training institutions and the communities involved. I encourage all key stakeholders to continue their efforts in understanding the importance the cultural, linguistic and ethnic components have in enhancing the quality of care for our population living in long-term care.

### It Truly Takes A Village to Raise a Child

By: Amanda Hicks

RN, BScN, MPH, Manager of the Niagara Region Public Health initiative, Healthy Babies Healthy Children / Child Health Program.

2011

Growing up in an age-friendly community is important in the development of our children. We must understand how supporting children in the early years will benefit our communities now and in the future.

To help adults of all generations understand the needs and rights of all children, Early Years Niagara, along with community partners, created the Niagara Children's Charter (NCC). Based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child the charter highlights ten markers that all children need to thrive, for example: safe food and water, proper housing, protection from discrimination, and access to education.

Niagara is one of the first regions in Canada to create a charter based on the specific needs of our children. Overall, the NCC states that children are entitled to basic rights and freedom and because of their unique vulnerability, it is the responsibility of all generations to ensure that children are safe from abuse and neglect and that they have access to society's resources.

All of our children have the potential to thrive in an age-friendly community. The early years of life sets them in a direction that they are likely to stay on - good or bad. We all have the ability to shape that direction. Each contact we have with a child is an opportunity to positively influence their path. Get started now and build a strong foundation for the children in your life.

## Access to Community Resources Are Available

By: Bunny Alexander,

member of Welland Age Friendly Community Action Committee and a Board Member for the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Community Care Access Centre

2011

For a community to be age friendly, knowing how to get information and how to access health services is important.

At a recent discussion about aging, a gentleman stood up and said, "I've never been a senior before, and I've never needed to access healthcare the way I do now. The trouble is I don't know what I don't know."

In plain language, this man sent a strong message to organizations that provide services to seniors. The Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Community Care Access Centre (HNHB CCAC) heard him loud and clear. HNHB CCAC is one of 14 provincially funded agencies across Ontario committed to connecting individuals with the care and services they need. While the CCAC provides services to people of all ages, the majority of those who use CCAC services are seniors. CCAC staff can link you with services in your community to help manage your changing healthcare needs; from connecting you with healthcare services, to supporting you to return from the hospital or to even avoid the hospital altogether. The CCAC can also help explore next stages in options such as long-term care. They have the expertise, caring and commitment to support seniors to live as independently as possible.

CCAC can answer your questions about healthcare services and it may be a simple question such as finding the phone number for a local seniors centre. Other times it's a longer conversation about supporting someone after they have had a stroke or other serious health care issues. Each caller has different needs and the CCAC staff understands their concerns and connects them with the right support.

CCAC staff is available by telephone from 8:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. every day of the year. To help answer detailed questions, such as options for retirement homes, or referrals for foot care, they have access to the region's most comprehensive database. CCAC staff can provide information in English, French, or over 100 other languages if need be.

CCACs coordinate a variety of health services to help people maintain their health, independence, and quality of life. CCACs are governed by a volunteer board of directors and funded by the Local Health Integration Network through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Anyone can contact the CCAC - a person needing care, a family member, caregiver, friend, physician or other health care professional. Call toll free 1-800-810-0000 or visit [www.hnhb.ccac-ont.ca](http://www.hnhb.ccac-ont.ca) for more information.

## Heroes in the Home: Caregiver Recognition Program

By: Bunny Alexander,

member of Welland Age Friendly Community Action Committee and a Board Member for the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Community Care Access Centre

2011

Age-Friendly is about enhancing the independence of older adults, indeed all populations. Every day, people in our communities provide care to those facing the challenges of age, illness and disability. This fall, the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Community Care Access Centre (HNHB CCAC) will hold its second annual Heroes in the Home Caregiver Recognition Awards, to recognize and say thank you to the special individuals who give so much of themselves to help others in need in our communities. Whether it is through warm smiles, shared laughter, or caring expertise, caregivers make it possible for countless individuals to live at home with dignity.

"Family caregivers today are absorbing and ever-increasing part of health care costs and contributing hundreds of millions of hours of unpaid labour. In 1999, an economic assessment of family caregivers valued their work at 5 billion dollars per year, which could be worth as much as 12.3 million dollars per year today," according to CARP's 2008 submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance.

The HNHB CCAC Heroes in the Home caregiver recognition program honours unpaid caregivers, including family members, and friends whose kindness and commitment allows Niagara residents requiring care to live full lives in their communities and often in their own homes, despite the limitations of age, illness, or disability.

"These caregivers are ordinary people doing extraordinary things," says Melody Miles, CEO, HNHB CCAC. "With an aging population and rising health care costs, caregivers are the invisible backbone of the health and long term care system."

Anyone can nominate a caregiver. Please take a few moments to recognize a caregiver you know. Complete the one-page, on-line nomination form available on [www.hnhb.ccac-ont.ca](http://www.hnhb.ccac-ont.ca). Submit your nomination before September 12, 2011\*. All nominees will be invited to a special ceremony to receive a Certificate of Appreciation. Please visit [www.hnhb.ccac-ont.ca](http://www.hnhb.ccac-ont.ca) for updates and to learn more about the Heroes in the Home Program.

\* Dates shown in articles have passed.

## Is Your Home Age-Friendly?

By: Deb Rollo,  
Program Manager, CSSN

2011

Do you want to stay independent, and continue to live in your home as you age?

**Take a look around you;** What would make your bathroom safer? Do you have to use stairs? Do you have good lighting both inside and outside of your home? Are there items that cause you to trip or stumble? Is it difficult for you to reach items in your kitchen?

Is your home age friendly?

Statistics show that people want to continue to live in their homes as they grow older. 'Aging in place', as experts call it, can become more difficult as we grow older and when mobility and balance changes. Reports show that within every 10 minutes in Ontario, at least one senior will visit an emergency department due to a fall. Niagara has one of the highest ratios of seniors admitted to hospital due to a fall; this can affect a person's quality of life. Deciding to make some simple changes can make a home more age friendly.

Community Support Services of Niagara (CSSN), Safety at Home program, promotes an age-friendly service geared to providing individuals with the tools necessary to protect their independence and mobility within the home environment. Services offered include a free in-depth home assessment to look at obvious risk factors including slippery flooring to the less obvious, (i.e.) lighting in the bedroom and for those nighttime bathroom visits. Information is given to allow you to make choices regarding the inside and outside of your house or apartment.

If home modifications are recommended such as handrail installation, links can be made with a screened home maintenance broker, who charges a reasonable fee. If people think that they cannot afford to be safe, the program offers options.

The Safety at Home program is a partnered project. Should the need arise for a visit with an occupational therapist, or other service provider; Program Manager, Patricia Regier can make the appropriate link.

For more information on the Safety at Home Project or other services provided by CSSN, please call 905-682-3800 or visit the website at [www.cssn.on.ca](http://www.cssn.on.ca)

## Population Aging

By: Doug Rapelje,

former Director, Niagara Region Social Services and Senior Citizens Department.; Chair, Welland City Senior Citizens Advisory Committee; member of the Age Friendly Community Management Committee

2010

Important to an Age Friendly Community is the availability of health and social services as needed. In Niagara, this has become a major challenge.

"While the aging of Canadian Society does not warrant alarmist reactions, we need to plan realistically for senior care." This is one of the important statements in Population Aging and the Evolving Care Needs of Old Canadians, the title of a study authored by Neena L. Chappel.

This understanding is especially important in Niagara as we have one of the oldest populations in Canada. As the first of the "Baby Boomers" generation turns 65, the official age of retirement, this study provides a timely overview of the main health and social policy challenges presented by population aging in three areas: informal care, formal care and prevention. The report states, "There is much argument and debate among experts as to whether Canada's existing public programs will be sustainable with the increase in the number of seniors and their higher-than-average use of health and social services."

Chappel, a gerontologist, shows that in the coming years more seniors will depend on fewer individuals to provide the care they need. She underscores that when health fails, however, support by unpaid family and friends are the mainstay of care.

"It remains unclear whether "Baby Boomers" will have better or worse health or will live longer than those who are currently elderly as the incidence of some diseases is declining while other are on the rise."

Studies like this help governments, planners, and service providers determining the future health and social services needs of our growing older population and are important in having Age



## Senior Friendly Hospitals

By: Doug Rapelje,

former Director, Niagara Region Social Services and Senior Citizens Department.; Chair, Welland City Senior Citizens Advisory Committee; member of the Age Friendly Community Management Committee

2010

In the winter of 2011, the Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand and Brant (HNHB) and Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) assembled a Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy Task Group to help guide work on LHIN's priority of improving senior health through a model of Senior Friendly Hospital care.

The framework for Senior Friendly Hospitals reflects the framework for the Age Friendly Community project since it looks at a community that supports senior health and lifestyle as it relates to respect and support for all citizens, access and inclusion for all, community engagement in decision-making, livability and accountability.

I commend this important and timely initiative that promotes hospital practices that better meet the physical, emotional, and psychosocial needs of older adults.

The report acknowledges that to achieve a Senior Friendly Hospital Model, they must recognize the diverse needs of seniors and specialized services required.

This initiative is timely, with the arrival of the "Baby Boomers" and the prediction the over-65 population will double by 2031. Also, while seniors makeup about 16% of the population, they account for 40% of hospital services, and 45% of overall health spending. More seniors will be benefiting from the Senior Friendly Hospital Strategy, and implementing the recommendation will help change the culture and understanding of the special and diverse needs of hospitalized seniors.

"Each and every day, we work to ensure that our parents and grandparents receive the best care, in the right place at the right time. They raised and cared for us, taught us values and worked hard to give us a future. That's why initiatives like "Senior Friendly Hospitals" are so important as they help ensure our hospitals and the health care system cares for them as they cared for us: Donna Cripps, CEO, Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand and Brant Local Health Integration Network.

This is a timely and needed initiative creating Senior Friendly Hospitals that will be welcomed by seniors and their families.

## Hospice Niagara Bereavement Support Programs

By: Doug Rapelje,

former Director, Niagara Region Social Services and Senior Citizens Department.; Chair, Welland City Senior Citizens Advisory Committee; member of the Age Friendly Community Management Committee

2012

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## Living Longer, Living Well

By: Doug Rapelje,

former Director, Niagara Region Social Services and Senior Citizens Department.; Chair, Welland City Senior Citizens Advisory Committee; member of the Age Friendly Community Management Committee

2013

In January, the report **Living Longer, Living Well**, by Dr. Samir Sinha, head of Ontario's Senior Strategy, was released providing highlights and recommendations for a seniors strategy in Ontario. The report states that "Through our consultations, we learned that Ontario's coming of age will undoubtedly change the way we do things and force us to make changes as a society as how best to meet the needs of our aging population"

The number of people age 65 and over will double in the next two decades so it is timely that the province is initiating its first comprehensive senior strategy, providing direction on current needs, values and preferences. Dr. Sinha recommends five principles to move a senior strategy forward in Ontario: access, equity, choice, value and quality.

The report specifically acknowledges and supports the need to develop Elder Friendly Communities. "Through our consultations we learned that our communities need to be the foundation of a senior's strategy. Therefore, to fulfill the government's mission to make Ontario the best place to grow up and grow old, we will need to foster the development of elder friendly communities that recognize the great diversity amongst older persons, promotes their inclusion and contributions in all areas of community life, respects their decisions and lifestyle choices, and anticipates and responds flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences."

Over the last three years the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative has promoted these current needs, values and preferences for growing up and growing old.

## We are All Accountable

By: Erin McGinns,  
Health Promoter for Substance Misuse Prevention, Niagara Region Public Health

2010

We are all accountable for our actions in an Age-Friendly Community. Nearly 18% of grade 7-12 students report using prescription drugs for non-medical purposes. Do you have prescription medications that are unused, outdated, and sitting in your medicine cabinets?

### Why should you dispose of your unused medications?

Access to unused medications contributes to abuse of prescription and over-the-counter medications. This includes painkillers, such as those drugs prescribed after surgery; depressants, such as sleeping pills or anti-anxiety drugs; and stimulants, such as those drugs prescribed for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Cough, cold, and sleeping medications are examples over-the-counter medications.

The 2009 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) shows that nearly 18% of grade 7-12 students report using prescription drugs for non-medical purposes. They are the third most commonly misused substance among Ontario students in grades 7-12. 74% of students who have misused prescription drugs report obtaining them from their home (OSDUHS 2009).

In 2008, there were 36 individuals admitted to the emergency room due to poisoning by opioids in the Niagara region. As well, deaths and hospital admissions in Ontario from the misuse of prescription medications have doubled since 2004. It is important to monitor any prescription drugs you have in your home and safely dispose of any unused medications

### Sooo....here is what you can do to help:

- Keep all medications in a secure location.
- Do an inventory of your medicine cabinet and monitor quantities.
- Set an example. Do not use medications not prescribed to you. Do not share medications in your home.
- Talk to children about the safe use of medications and the risks of misuse.
- Encourage parents and grandparents to take the same precautions.
- Return unused medications to your pharmacy. Visit Stewardship Ontario for a list of pharmacies accepting unused medications at [www.stewardshipontario.ca](http://www.stewardshipontario.ca).
- Do not put unused medications down the toilet or sink or in the garbage.

## Be Sure to Dispose of Unused Drugs

By: Erin McGinns

2011

We are all accountable for our actions in an Age-Friendly Community. Nearly 18 per cent of Grade 7 to 12 students report using prescription drugs for non-medical purposes according to the 2009 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS). Do you have prescription medications that are unused, outdated, and sitting in your medicine cabinets?

Why should you dispose of our unused medications?

Access to unused medication contributes to abuse of prescription and over-the-counter medications. This includes pain killers; depressants, such as sleeping pills or anti-anxiety drugs; and stimulants, such as those drugs prescribed for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Cough, cold, and sleeping medications are examples of over-the-counter medications.

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## Hospice Niagara Bereavement Support Programs

By: Geoff Straw,  
Manager of Client Services

2013

Hospice Niagara is a non-profit agency providing compassion, hope, and encouragement to terminally ill individuals, and support to their caregivers and those who grieve their deaths.

Grief is a complex blend of experiences such as: the nature of your relationship with the person who died, your personality, your religious or cultural background, your gender, your age, and your previous experience with loss. Grief may be expressed emotionally, spiritually, physically and or mentally.

Physically, you may feel fatigued and lacking energy or drive. Sleep patterns may be disturbed, your appetite may be weakened, and you may be absent-minded.

Hospice Niagara provides a comfortable and safe environment to assist you as you work through the many layers of grief. Support groups are offered throughout the year and consist of a small number of people who are all grieving a recent loss. Through support and education, participants are able to better understand that their reactions are normal, and that healing is possible.

The Grief Walk is an opportunity to meet with others who are grieving, while enjoying the benefits of exercise at the same time. Participants stop for coffee and a chat along the way. This is a "drop in" group which meets every week throughout the year.

Trained volunteers are available to visit individuals who have recently lost a loved one, and to assist with the many emotions that may arise. It can be helpful to have someone who will listen non-judgmentally to your story.

## The Future of Home Care

By: Jim Kershaw

2010

Harold was fiercely independent in his two-story dwelling with a leaky roof and the unstable front steps. A room-sized damp beige carpet was covered with mice droppings. As a result, an upstairs bedroom served as his headquarters. Harold roared if I made the slightest suggestion of moving. In detailed rhetoric and enthusiasm he would announce his grocery list but really enjoyed getting out and wheeling around the store while hunched over his cart. Then, there was the embarrassment of not having enough money for the goods.

I offered to shop alone for him and he was reluctant but then somewhat relieved. I'd buy what I could from his list although I'd be stung with criticism if I forgot his preferred brands. Eventually his heart gave out and he died lonely and alone. Sadly, I'll always wonder if the right home care could have improved his health and living situation.

Recently, I met Lori Flaxy at a meeting with people connected with Niagara's Age-Friendly Initiative. Owner of Ontario Senior Services, Ms. Flaxy is a Certified Professional Consultant on Aging (CPCA). Flaxy believes in reaching out to help individuals by building strong relationships that can result in an independent future. The sensibility of home care leads me to believe in the future prospect of many happier Harolds.

## HIV and Aging

By: Jody Yurchuk,  
Education/Support Coordinator, AIDS Niagara

2013

December 1st was World AIDS Day. Each year, the world remembers those who lost their fight to AIDS and celebrates the victories that are helping people survive.

AIDS Niagara has been supporting people living with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) and AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) since 1987. When the agency began, the phrase "HIV and aging" seemed to be a contradiction. Now it's a definite reality that people living with HIV are advancing in years.

New medications help people live longer and have healthier lives. The medical community continues to research and note how the virus affects Canada's population. HIV is no longer a death sentence; it is now considered to be a chronic illness. However, there are no definitive answers regarding how the toxic medications will affect people living with HIV. It's difficult for seniors to know for certain whether symptoms they experience are a result of the aging process or the result of years of taking HIV meds.

After more than 25 years, discrimination is still a hindrance to HIV positive older adults living a safe and healthy existence. Education is key. I encourage everyone to learn more about how HIV is transmitted and how you can protect yourself. The Canadian AIDS Society has excellent information on it's website about how HIV affects people as they age, [www.cnaids.ca](http://www.cnaids.ca).

It's time for everyone to follow the leadership of the Public Health Agency of Canada: "To promote and protect the health of Canadians through leadership, partnership, innovation and action in public health". UNAIDS is promoting that there be an end to new HIV infections by the year 2015. Together, we can make this happen.



## Senior-Friendly Health Care

By: Lynn McCleary

PhD RN, Associate Professor at Brock University

2010

"When I look back, I see that almost everyone I worked with was older. I just didn't think of them as older." Hearing someone describe her work in arts organizations this way surprised me - but it shouldn't have. As a nurse, I know lots of health care providers who were slow to recognize that most of their patients are older. Why should it be any different for her?

Mathy Mezey, a leading gerontological nurse says "Older adults are the core business of health care." It's not that being older means being sick. However, the chances of needing health care increase with age.

The reality is that most patients in hospitals and community health care agencies are older adults. Unfortunately, they are more likely to experience problems with their health care than younger patients are. Fortunately, when health care providers use specialized knowledge about aging, health and illness, their patients are less likely to experience problems or complications, they are more satisfied with their care, and costs decrease.

The Niagara Health System recognized this when they became an Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario Best Practice Spotlight Organization in 2003. The NHS implemented best practice guidelines, including several with a focus on older patients. Best practice guidelines are research summaries with directions for improving care. For example, preventing problems like falls and injuries in older adults.

Senior-Friendly hospitals are a new priority for the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) that plan and oversee health care in Ontario. A survey in the Hamilton Niagara Halton Brant LHIN found that hospitals are becoming senior friendly by providing education for staff and specialized services like the NHS Geriatric Assessment Unit. However, there is room for improvement; just 41% of hospitals in our LHIN have a senior friendly strategy.

## Accessibility at the Heart of an Age-Friendly Community

By: Margaret Sanderson,  
MA, Brock University Accessibility (AODA) Coordinator

2010

As communities and organizations across Niagara work to remove barriers to persons with disabilities, the resulting benefits of improved accessibility are many.

- A curb ramp makes a sidewalk accessible for someone using a wheelchair.
- Audible signals allow a pedestrian with vision loss to safely cross the road.
- Assistive listening devices amplify hearing for a concert-goer with hearing loss.

Accessibility not only benefits persons with disabilities. Many older adults also experience barriers to daily activities as a part of the natural aging process. The 2006 Participation and Activity Limitation Survey: Disability in Canada (Statistics Canada) confirms that the disability rate increases with age: 43.4 % of persons aged 65 and over, and 56.3 % of persons aged 75 and over, report having an activity limitation.

Disability and aging appear to be intertwined. Whether older adults have disabilities, or consider themselves to be "disabled", they benefit from buildings designed with accessible features and the accessible customer-service practices of business and organizations. Accessibility is at the heart of an age-friendly community.

Let's take a look at some examples of how accessibility enhances the well-being and quality of life of aging citizens.

- Clear, wide paths with a level entrance make a visit to a grocery store easier for someone who uses a walker or cane because of reduced mobility or stamina.
- Websites using clear and simple words, easy navigation and only necessary images encourage an older adult who may have vision loss, cognitive or other disabilities to browse online.
- Employees of businesses and organizations are trained to comfortably interact with older adults in a manner that respects their independence and dignity.
- Well-lighted signage in contrasting colours and large font, and provides clear direction and information, benefits older adults with vision or memory loss.
- Doors with accessible hardware, such as levered handles, open easily for someone with arthritis. Automatic door operators assist everyone.
- Captioned videos allow older adults with hearing loss to receive the message.

There are numerous other examples where improving accessibility enables our growing population of older adults to be socially included. May 29 to June 4 marks National Access Awareness Week across many Canadian communities. As we reflect upon the barriers faced by people with disabilities, let's also acknowledge the tremendous benefits that accessibility provides older adults who live in our community. An accessible community is a community for all ages.

## Long-Term Care Waitlists are Growing

By: Sean Keays,  
MA Gerontology, CAO, Foyer Richelieu Welland

2011

As the population ages, the length of waiting lists to get into long-term care (LTC) homes just keeps growing and growing. There are about 76,000 LTC beds in homes across the province, which are 98 percent full and there is a waiting list of over 25,000 people. For example, in the City of Welland there is a waiting list of more than 500 people for approximately 400 beds. According to statistics compiled by the Ontario Health Quality Council, wait times for LTC beds in Ontario have tripled over the past five years.

The Council states that the average wait time for a LTC bed in Ontario is more than three months and up to 173 days for people waiting at home. For those waiting in hospital to be moved to a LTC home, the average wait is 53 days, resulting in 16 percent of expensive acute care beds being taken up by people who do not need them. Therefore, not only is the LTC waiting list impacting the elderly and LTC homes, it is also having a negative impact on local hospitals.

In an analysis of the Ministry of Health and LTC's waitlist data, OANHSS (the provincial association representing not-for-profit providers of LTC, services and housing for seniors) calculates that the greatest demand exists in the not-for-profit sector. Not-for-profits account for just over 40 percent of all homes in the province and less than one of the half of all beds, but they are the number one preference of two thirds of individuals on the total provincial waitlist.

I find it interesting that when talk emerges about privatizing our hospitals it creates such a huge stir, that discussions immediately dwindle and disappear. On the other hand, it is deemed acceptable to make a profit from our elderly living in LTC. Action must be taken by the Ministry of Health and LTC to increase the number of LTC beds in Ontario and ensure the majority be attributed to the not-for-profit sector.

## Living a Healthy Brain Lifestyle

By: Teena Kindt,  
CEO, Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region

2011

A diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or a dementia does not mean that the individual should stop doing the activities that they enjoy. A diagnosis of dementia means doing things differently. The Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region believes in and advocates for Age-Friendly Communities. Our Early Stage programs were established on the premise of discussing, planning and structuring one's own activities is vital and will result in increased independence, better quality of life and the ability to engage in meaningful activities. Research indicates that it is very important for individuals experiencing dementia to focus on what they can still do. Although there is not a cure for Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, such activities can promote better health and well-being.

Muriel, an Early Stage participant was relieved when given the diagnosis of dementia, as she had known for a few years that something was wrong. She does not see herself differently and states, "Other people say, why me? I say, why not? I think that if you are going through something yourself, you are able to help others going through the same thing."

Muriel shared her experiences as a guest speaker at our Changing Melody forum held in St. Catharines last spring. It is a forum specifically designed by and for persons with early-stage dementia and their partners in care to understand that their lives are certainly changing, but they can continue to live meaningful lives. The goal is to provide people living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, as well as, their family members with information and strategies for planning and maximizing their quality of life with dementia.

The theme for this year's forum is "Building Hope: Living a Healthy Brain Lifestyle.". Strategies for persons with dementia and their care partners is the focus of discussion. Topics include nutrition, exercise, brain health, socialization and education. The Keynote speaker is Dr. Christopher Patterson, Chief of Geriatric Services of Hamilton Health Services and a Professor at McMaster University.

The Niagara Alzheimer Chapter will be providing transportation to and from the forum on a first come first serve basis. The forum includes lunch and a break for the cost of \$35 for persons with dementia/care partners and \$60 for professionals. Mark the calendar for Saturday, May 7 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel in Hamilton.

Information for A Changing Melody can be found at [www.alzheimerniagara.ca](http://www.alzheimerniagara.ca) or by calling 905-687-3914.

## Take a Break, an Alzheimer Coffee Break

By: Teena Kindt,  
CEO, Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region

2011

Every five minutes someone in Canada develops a dementia, which will increase to every two minutes by 2038 because of an increasing number of older adults. Alzheimer's disease and related dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases that destroy vital brain cells. Currently, there are over 8,200 people in the Region who are experiencing a progressive dementia, the most common of which is Alzheimer's disease.

The Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region was founded in 1984 through the vision of a small group of family caregivers who wanted to share their experiences and lend support to other families. Today, it is one of the largest chapters in Canada. The Family and Resource Centre is the only facility to address both physical and cognitive issues. The Society's mission aligns with the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative: to improve the quality of life for older adults and their caregivers. To support the individual with dementia, as well as their primary caregiver and family members to ensure the well-being and dignity of all involved a family approach is taken.

A diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease does not mean that the person should stop doing activities they enjoy but look at new strategies for doing them or assisted cueing. The Alzheimer Society provides necessary aids and assistive devices that will facilitate optimum function, at no charge.

Get involved. National Coffee Break Day is Thursday, September 15th. It is fun, social and very easy to organize. It is a time when you can invite your co-workers, clients, colleagues, friends or neighbours to enjoy a cup of coffee or any other beverage and some treats at a break time or another specific get-together. Then, simply ask everyone to make a donation. Every Coffee Break makes a difference. We supply a kit, you supply the social environment. Our local goal is \$100,000 and the campaign runs from September to December. This year we are encouraging more individuals to host a get-together in their own home. For information or to register, visit [www.alzheimerniagara.ca](http://www.alzheimerniagara.ca) or call 905-687-6856 X556.

## Beyond Health and Social Services

By: Virginia Stewart,

MA, Former Community Coordinator, Niagara's Age-Friendly Community project (2010-2013), Advocate for walkable communities

2012

Niagara's population is aging, as are Hamilton's, Haldimand's and Brant's. And, so is Toronto's and North Bay's, as are communities across Canada and around the world. The number of people 65 years and older is the fastest growing market today. The older crowd is living longer: 30 years has been added to life expectancy.

Aging is making its way on to many agendas and not just health and social services. Klaus Schwab Founder and Executive Chair of the World Economic Forum states aging will define how our economies work. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) members have met with the private sector to discuss preparing their respective economies for the fiscal and economic opportunities of an aging population. Michael Hodin, the Executive Director of the Global Coalition on Aging, argues that businesses are also discussing economic opportunities from age-friendly services and products to reinventing the workplace to accommodate an older adult workforce.

Louth County in Ireland has leveraged the idea of age-friendly as part of their 10-point economic action plan (2009-2015). Their strategy encompasses a series of task forces, including one for foreign direct investment, age-friendly businesses, tourism and heritage, and agriculture. Their aim is to make Louth County the best place to do business.

Considering your bottom line, as a business as or a public sector agency, the first step is to understand this growing market of older adults. The Public Health Agency of Canada provides a number of on-line resources to help you get to "Know Your Audience". Among the resources are the Canadian and World Health Organization Age-Friendly publications.

One of the most resourceful publications is a 46-page guide "Age-Friendly Communication." This is a must have if seniors are on your agenda. The publication is chockfull of practical advice. There is a lot to learn about this target group, especially in this ever-changing world of technology and when 65 is the new 40.

## A Number or A Mindset?

By: Virginia Stewart,

MA, Former Community Coordinator, Niagara's Age-Friendly Community project (2010-2013), Advocate for walkable communities

2012

Retiring at 65 used to be the traditional norm. But, those 65 years of age are challenging retirement. For some, 65 means continuing to work to stay engaged in the community, have a sense of identity or keep a roof over their head.

Sixty-five used to be when getting older begins. However, studies have found the new expressed normal for aging is over 80. Not surprising when our life expediency has increased 30 years. Those celebrating their 100th birthday are the fastest growing age group.

Statistics Canada uses 65 as a threshold marker for gauging our older population. Accordingly, seniors now account for a record proportion of Niagara's population and it's accelerating at a rapid rate, as the baby boomers become 65. This growth will continue until 2031 before it will start to level off.

Fully the concept of aging is shifting. So must the out of date policies, programs and practices that support the idea that older adults are shuffling to their graves. The aim of the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative is about increasing an awareness of the shifting demographic and moving towards action to change the myths of growing older.

How will the aging phenomenon of Niagara's population play out in the coming years? It may be too early to tell, but already agencies and organizations are shifting the conversation from what do we want to do for and about seniors, to engaging them in a relationship of equal citizens.

Engagement in decision-making is a foundational principle of age-friendly communities. A community that values the participation of older adults will engage them as primary stakeholders in all aspects of program and service development from housing to health and social services, from recreation to transportation.

## My Life has Changed 100 per cent

By: Wendy Thompson,  
Resource Unit Manager, Niagara Region Housing

2011

The Wellness Supportive Living Program is devoted to improving the quality of life for older adults by ensuring they get the care they need in their own homes. Regis Watts' life has changed 100 per cent because of this program. She calls the staff "angels." Here is her story.

Regis is one of 199 tenants in Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) for seniors here the Wellness Program provides a holistic approach to independent living. At 87, she has always made Niagara her home. She was a stay-at-home mother to her three children until her divorce. Then she ran a group home before moving into her NRH community 20 years ago. Her grown children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren visit often.

Regis was grateful to return home from almost five months in the hospital this year, but taking care of herself and her home became a challenge. The Supportive Living Program enabled her to stay at home.

Regis lights up when she describes the staff who assist her. "My life has changed 100 per cent since they came here. They are so conscientious, so concerned and so kind, they called the hospital to see how I was doing. Now, while I'm recovering, they make my breakfast in the morning and help with the housework and laundry. I try to attend the exercise therapy groups. The instructor knows each lady by name."

The Wellness Support Living Program, funded through the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN, is a partnership program between the March of Dimes, Niagara Region Seniors Community Programs, Community Support Services Niagara and NRH. The program provides services ranging from personal care, friendly visiting and housekeeping to food care, blood pressure and falls prevention clinics; in addition to social events.



### Meeting the Housing Needs of Niagara's Seniors

By: Alexandra Swigger,  
Affordable Housing Analyst

2013

As the population in Niagara continues to age, communities must respond to ensure individuals are receiving the supports they need. Many seniors are increasingly running into difficulties as they experience new health challenges and deal with fixed incomes that do not keep up with the cost of living. Having a home that meets one's financial and physical needs is the foundation for maintaining a good quality of life for all seniors. For individuals to feel secure in their home, whether an apartment, detached home or senior's residence, the home must be affordable, well maintained, and suitable for their needs.

Niagara Regional Housing continues to address the housing needs of seniors by improving access to the supply of affordable, suitable housing. It recently begun construction of a new senior's apartment building at 235 Fitch Street in Welland. This complex will provide housing to seniors aged 55 and older who have a range of affordability needs. The building will include some units that have rents based on household income and some units with rents that are lower than the local average market rents in Niagara.

The Fitch Street apartment will provide its residents with an affordable home that allows them to be part of the broader community. The complex includes plans for a wellness center, space for yoga and exercise programs and communal gardens for larger community use. The building will be energy efficient using geothermal technology for heating and cooling to limit CO2 emissions and protect our environment.

Access to suitable, affordable housing is a pillar of strong and healthy communities. Improving that access is the goal of a 10-year housing and homeless action plan currently being developed by Niagara Region in consultation with housing advocates, landlords, tenants, community agencies and other stakeholders, including seniors. For more information about the action plan, and to find out how to make your voice heard and provide input on this important issue, visit [www.niagararegion.ca/HHAP](http://www.niagararegion.ca/HHAP).

## Clear Concise Communication

By: Chris Woodall,  
Niagara North Community Legal Assistance

2010

The relationship between a residential tenant and the landlord is all about clear, concise communication; an age-friendly approach.

The best kind of communication in a tenant and landlord relationship is in writing. Most important is to date your note or letter, give the landlord a deadline to agree to do the thing asked of him - and make a copy of the letter for your files so you can prove later to the Landlord & Tenant Board that you did indeed write the landlord.

The sink is backed up and the stove doesn't work: write the landlord about it. You'll paint the walls and fix a door; he'll agree to count that as a month's rent. Write the landlord about it. That puts the complaint or the deal onto paper. This is now evidence should the landlord go back on his word.

Another effective form of communication is to take photos of what you believe needs fixing. Get a close-up shot of the offending problem, but also snap a stand-back shot so the second photo shows the problem in relation to the entire room. Make prints.

Lack of evidence is the biggest failure I see when advising tenants at the Landlord & Tenant Board. It is very disappointing for tenants when I have to explain that there is no case unless they can show evidence. Letters and photos, it's all about evidence should your loving landlord/tenant relationship turn into the War of 1812.

## How not to pay rent

By: Chris Woodall,  
Niagara North Community Legal Assistance

2010

There are two common things a landlord does that the wise tenant can use to not pay rent.

Well, "not pay rent" is a bit of a disguise - what the tenant is going to do is "suspend" paying rent until the landlord wakes up to his or her misbehaviour.

Off the top I'd like to say most Niagara Region landlords are hard-working responsible decent people. In my work at Niagara North Community Legal Assistance where I advise tenants, however, I hear from tenants who have landlords who are not so noble.

One of these un-noble activities is for the landlord to hide who she or he is and where she or he lives. That's too bad for the landlord.

The law - that law being the Residential Tenancies Act - says a landlord must give the tenant the landlord's full name and mailing address so the tenant can contact the landlord, especially to serve legal documents on the landlord.

Second, if there is a written lease, the law says the landlord must give the tenant a copy of that lease.

Should the landlord want to play loosey-goosey with the law by refusing to do either of these things, they can forget laying their hands on the rent.

The law under Section 12 of the Act allows that "the tenant's obligation to pay the rent is suspended." That means holding on to the rent until the landlord wakes up, smells the double-double and does what the landlord should have done from the beginning.

The tenant then has to pay the suspended rent to the landlord.

There are other common sins of omission of the landlord the tenant should be aware of: the landlord can't dictate how the tenant pays rent (can't demand cash, for example); must provide receipts for every amount of money paid (not just issue one a year); and must give the tenant a written notice at least 24 hours before visiting the tenant (and there better be a legal reason).

Tenants have a lot of rights. Contact the legal clinic to discover them.

## Landlords: Read the fine print

By: Chris Woodall,  
Niagara North Community Legal Assistance

2010

Once upon a time at the Landlord & Tenant Board, there was a landlord who wanted to evict his tenant. There were many reasons for this, the landlord said. The tenant, of course, denied there was a problem. The landlord started his attempt to evict the tenant by serving her an "N7" type of notice and marked off a variety of boxes on that notice to tell the tenant what a bad woman she was.

At the hearing, however, I advised the Board Member to dismiss the application even before the hearing really got going. She did so immediately, all because the landlord couldn't count. Where the landlord had marked off a box on the N7 Notice, that box clearly said marking this box was only if the building contained three or fewer apartments. As it turned out, the building contained three tenant apartments - plus the landlord's apartment, equaling four apartments. Maybe three equals four in Bizarro World, but not in Ontario. The landlord didn't read the fine print and/or couldn't count. So the landlord lost the \$170 it cost him to make the application.

This not reading the fine print is quite common among self-represented landlords and has occurred even when landlords are represented by a paralegal or lawyer: they didn't read the fine print of the Notice.

In the case of paralegals and lawyers assisting landlords, they sometimes go for the big splashy Notice, but end up losing because it's not the correct Notice. You don't get away with using a nuclear bomb when a kick in the shins will do. Asta la vista \$170, baby!

As well, I have convinced Board Members to dismiss many landlord applications simply because the landlord did not write out exact dates and times of the terrible things they say the tenant did. Goodbye Mr. Chips and his \$170!

Be specific. A landlord writing "the tenant made a lot of noise" means nothing, it's too foggy to be understood. The Notice's fine print demands exactness.

The tenant has a right to defend herself and must know exactly what she's being accused of. Her defence will win if the landlord can't be bothered to pay attention.

## Tenants: Don't mix square pegs with round holes

By: Chris Woodall,  
Niagara North Community Legal Assistance

2010

Tenants are often not any more clever than landlords who do not pay attention to the application they make to appear before the Landlord & Tenant Board.

As we said in another article: It helps a lot to make your application a success if you bother to read the fine print.

A T2 Tenants Rights application does not cost the tenant an application fee to file it with the Board. A T6 Maintenance application will cost the tenant \$45.

The T2 Rights application is for, among other things, accusing the landlord of no "vital services" - no heat, hydro or hot water - or if the landlord changes the locks without giving keys to the tenant; or if the landlord behaves badly.

The T6 Maintenance application is for those times when the landlord is being the Wicked Witch of the West as far as keeping things working. And for the landlords reading this: make no mistake, you are responsible for 100% of the maintenance issues of your residential properties.

Too often a tenant will try to put T6 maintenance complaints on a "free" T2 application. If you can make the sound of a nasty game show buzzer for a "wrong answer," go ahead and make that noise. That was fun, eh?

Tenants have to be sure to keep the issues divided. If they don't, the landlord - if he or she has any smarts at all - will chop up the application like Edward Sissorhands in a frenzy.

If I get a chance to see the tenant in my role as Tenant Duty Counsel during Landlord & Tenant Board hearing days, I will advise tenants their application is likely to be dismissed if they pursue it; then I advise them they can ask the Board to allow the tenant to withdraw the application, re-do it properly, then file a new application to pursue their complaints. The Board Member will generally go along with that, even if the landlord howls about a "wasted" hearing day.

I will often also suggest the tenant contact me at the legal clinic for help with this when they are ready to try again. (And why not? We do not charge for our services.)

### Learning Cafes

By: Dick Moore,  
Chair, Port Colborne Seniors Advisory Committee.

2010

Guiding by the knowledge that seniors are eager to learn the Seniors Advisory Committee of Port Colborne is partnering with Port Cares, Bridges Community Health Centre and local senior centres, to present a series of four free Learning Cafes.

The "Senior Motorists Driving Seminar", will focus on preparing for the test for mature drivers, how aging and medications may affect the ability to drive, transportation options and enhancing older driver safety. The session will feature speakers from Niagara Regional Police Services, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, Niagara Gatekeepers and Boggio Pharmacy. The session will be held at Friends Over 55, Senior Centre at 554 Fielden Avenue, Port Colborne, March 20\*, 2013 from 1p.m. to 3 p.m.

The second session will focus on Consumer Issues. Topics will include scams such as identity theft, payment card fraud and email fraud. The cafe will be on April 24, 2013 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., at the L.R Wilson Research Heritage Archives 286 King Street, Port Colborne. The speaker will be from Community Legal Services of Niagara South.

A speaker from Community Legal Services of Niagara will talk about Wills and Powers of Attorney on Wednesday, May 22\*, 2013 from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., at the Guild Hall at 72 Charlotte St, Port Colborne. Wills are written legal documents that set out your wishes for care and distribution of your estate after your death. Powers of Attorney are legal documents that give someone else the right to act on your behalf while you are alive.

On June 19\*, Senior Motorists Driving Seminar, in French, will be held Le Centre des Aines Francophones at 184 Mitchell Ave, Port Colborne from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

\*Dates have passed.

## Computers for Seniors

By Judy Sobchak,  
Facility & Administrative Coordinator, Niagara Region Community Services

2012

In 2008, the Niagara Region Community Services worked with the British Canadian Veterans Association (BCVA) in Niagara Falls to help them apply for a funding grant from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada under their New Horizons for Seniors program to run a Computers for Seniors program. This grant supports non-profit seniors groups to ensure that seniors can benefit from and contribute to, the quality of life in their communities. Their application was approved and the BCVA received \$25,000 to help local seniors enter the computer and internet age.

This program made it possible for seniors to communicate with family and friends who use computers, as well as access information on government, community and private sector services. The participating seniors learned how to use websites like [www.seniorsinfo.ca](http://www.seniorsinfo.ca), which have been specially developed for them, their family and caregivers. As well, the seniors became capable of using email, word processing, computer games and being able to search the World Wide Web. They learned computer skills and techniques that gave them the opportunity to meet and interact with other seniors.

The computers for the program were donated by Industry Canada's Computers for a Schools program and a training facility, as well instructors were offered through the Niagara Catholic District School Board. Under the program, 140 eligible Niagara Falls seniors received a free computer installed in their home, as well as six to eight 1½ hour training sessions. In-home training was offered for those with mobility issues. The program was such a success that other municipalities were asked to encourage their non-profit seniors groups to apply.

This year's application submission deadline was September 16. Again, Niagara Region Community Services worked with two non-profit seniors groups in Welland to help them apply. If approved, eligible seniors in Welland will have the same opportunity to acquire a computer, develop computer skills and connect with the rest of the world. They will be able to gain and hone skills that will enable them to connect with family and friends, and build new relationships with other seniors, the community and beyond.

## Laughter for All Ages

By: Lindsay Dressel,

Community Relations Manager, Willoughby Manor Retirement Residence, Niagara Falls

2010

Willoughby Manor a Chartwell retirement home in Chippawa recently sponsored a laughter clinic presented by Sue Gergely a certified laughter leader. Chartwell's commitment to creating opportunities for seniors to enjoy everyday living is what prompted Willoughby to sponsor the laughter clinic.

The idea of laughing and learning was all it took to bring a full room of seniors together on September 21st. The event had a positive response, people were curious about how laughter could reduce stress by decreasing anxiety, relieve pain and stabilize moods for people of all ages. As first time participants we were all pleased with the information we learned and grateful for the positive energy Sue brought to our evening.

Sue informed us how people of all ages often suppress laughter and she encouraged us to embrace our inner child and find ways to bring laughter to ourselves every day. She showed us a few methods to use in the mornings which had us all laughing, but the idea behind the exercises were simple, start everyday in a positive way.

Sue explained the various barriers to laughter and why it is so important to overcome them. She explained the barriers are like a poison but the cure is easy, an injection of laughter. By practicing to take situations and ourselves more lightly and find ways to laugh, the barriers can be brought down. The tips she gave us and the exercises she showed us were age-friendly and fun.

Sue teaches people of all ages how to live happier and healthier with laughter. She has designed a program that is age-friendly and has committed her time to bring health to Niagara communities one laugh at a time.

Sue Gergely will be holding her next laughter clinics at the St Catharines YMCA on October 18th\* and November 22nd\*.

\*Dates no longer relevant.



## Computers for Seniors Continued

By: Shienna Germain

2012

Previously, an article was published regarding the Niagara Region Community Services who worked with the British Canadian Veterans Association (BCVA) in Niagara Falls having helped them apply for a funding grant from the Human Resources and Skills Development of Canada under their New Horizons for Seniors program to run a Computers for Seniors program.

The article was well received and seniors displaying their interest in the program made numerous phone calls to the Age-Friendly Coordinator inquiring about the program and computer learning in general. The grant was unfortunately not approved; however, there is another similar program that will benefit interested seniors. The initiative is called Contact North, Ontario's Distance Education and Training Network.

Contact North is a non-profit organization that is funded by the Government of Ontario. The organization has 112 online learning centres located in smaller communities across the province that offers seniors access to online courses and programs from Ontario's public colleges, universities, high schools, literacy and basic skills providers.

Seniors now have the option of partaking courses and programs that are part-time or full-time depending on their availability. Since all of the courses are online, this allows for seniors to work at their own pace and convenience. With that being said, they even have the options of choosing live or recorded programs.

The organization provides computers and programs necessary for seniors to use throughout various centres and is equipped with helpful staff. Most importantly, there are even free courses available to help seniors create and use email accounts that will assist them connect with their family members and friends. They can also learn about what blogs are and how they can prepare presentations at no cost. Whether it's an introduction or memory refresher, this program is highly beneficial to all.

To find out more about this program: [www.contactnorth.ca](http://www.contactnorth.ca).

### Consequences of Poverty

By: Doug Rapelje,

former Director, Niagara Region Social Services and Senior Citizens Department.; Chair, Welland City Senior Citizens Advisory Committee; member of the Age Friendly Community Management Committee

2013

The Niagara Community Observatory at Brock University, in cooperation with Niagara Connects, recently published a Policy Brief titled "Are the Consequences of Poverty Holding Niagara Back?" It is a stark reminder that poverty is a growing issue affecting the lives of many seniors and other age groups within Niagara.

The report states "5.6% of Niagara families live below the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) in comparison to the Ontario average of 10.1%. A look behind the totals provides a more disturbing picture of poverty in Niagara."

This report is an eye opener that allows Niagara citizens to better understand the human cost of poverty on our citizens. The report also indicates that the estimated cost of poverty in Niagara is a staggering \$1.33 billion a year. The reality is that it is easier for people to turn a blind eye when it comes to poverty than to do something about it.

A common misconception is that the Age Friendly Community project is solely focused on one factor that promotes healthy active aging. Rather, the initiative is based on a wide range of factors such as transportation, housing, accessibility and the overall quality of life; overcoming poverty would strengthen all aspects of an age-friendly community, benefiting all ages.

David Siegel, Professor of Political Science at Brock and Director of Niagara Community Observatory states "the numbers should be a wake-up call for Niagara." According to Dr. Siegel, research indicates that investment in any poverty strategy is cost effective. It is important to acknowledge that a number of initiatives have been taken in Niagara to help reduce or eliminate poverty and that doing so makes our communities more Age Friendly for all ages.

"Poverty is the worst form of violence" Mahatma Gandhi.

### When We Were Kids...

By: Harold G. Sawchuk,  
member of the Niagara Active Transportation Network

2013

We can all recall the stories of grandparents walking to school uphill (both ways) in snow up to their hips, etc. It seems that times have changed!

Since 1985, the portion of Canadian children regularly walking to school has fallen by 50% to just 1 in 3. This is at a time when some 90% of children and youth are not meeting Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines. Declining activity levels are linked to obesity, illness and chronic diseases, such as, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer. Active transportation (walking or cycling) for the school journey and other short trips is one of the easiest ways to get regular daily physical activity.

Gil Penalosa, Executive Director of 8-80 Cities, a non-profit Canadian organization dedicated to contributing to the transformation of towns and cities into places where people can walk, bike, and access public transportation, says that if you create a community that's good for an 8 year old and good for an 80 year old, you will create a successful community for everyone: an age-friendly community. So, the values of school travel planning can impact all of us.

We all know that active transportation reduces traffic congestion, pollution and speeding around schools and neighborhoods, boosts physical activity, increases neighborly interactions and features eco-values of conservation and clean air.

The issues that face children and school travel planning are the same issues that face all citizens in the community. Simply stated, the built environment is not conducive for walking or cycling. Creating more walkable communities would help all those who are trying to get in more physical activity each day and may even encourage parents to allow their children to walk to school again.

## Buses Needed to Make Niagara Age-Friendly

By: Jackie Gervais,

Health Promoter Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, Niagara Region Public Health

2011

Many people want to stay living in their own home throughout their adult life. However, the community they live in may affect this decision.

Judy Peters is an active Fort Erie resident. She is a former nurse, has raised six children as a single mother and now takes care of her granddaughter. Four years ago, at age 50, Judy suffered a stroke, which left her blind. She has gradually gotten some vision back and has had to relearn independent living in her community. What she has discovered is the community's design makes a difference in your ability to be independent. To be age-friendly requires an enabling and supportive environment.

Before her stroke, Judy used to drive all over. Now, she walks and takes the bus everywhere. "I didn't know when the bus would come or how much money it cost, but I knew eventually it would come," Judy said recalling her first bus trip. "I couldn't see the step of the bus, so I put out my foot and felt around to find it. [All of the bus drivers] were so helpful." Judy now relies on local buses to run her errands and the Fort Erie Wal-Mart to Niagara Falls Wal-Mart bus to attend her medical appointments.

While Judy loves living in Fort Erie, "the environment is safe because it is not crazy busy," she does wish for greater transit system connectivity. She hopes that the inter-municipal bus will make it easier for her to reach the services she needs and support her ability to be independent. "There are lots of older adults coming to Fort Erie to retire. Right now, they can drive but they may not always be able to. It is important that they can walk or take the bus."

Judy continues to live life to the fullest, "You have to have the desire to make your life move forward. You have to have a positive attitude," and living in a community that supports people of all ages and abilities to walk and be independent is part of it.

In Niagara, six groups are working towards creating age-friendly communities; supporting people of all ages to walk, bicycle or take the bus. Together they form the Active Transportation Niagara Network. For more information on how you might get involved in supporting your community to be more walking, cycling and bus friendly, please call me, Jackie Gervais, 905-688-8248 ext. 7332.

## Walkable Communities

By: Jackie Gervais,

Health Promoter Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, Niagara Region Public Health

2013

Living in a safe, vibrant, age-friendly community is something we all want. Walkable communities are an important part of making our towns accessible for people of ALL AGES.

Well-designed, compact communities allow people to walk to school, work, stores, parks and restaurants. Walking is good for our health, the environment and the economy.

Towns, cities and rural hamlets have not always designed streets and sidewalks to make it easy for people to walk. But, individuals and citizens groups across Niagara are helping to change that.

In many Niagara municipalities, active transportation citizens groups are forming. Active transportation is people-powered transport such as walking, bike riding and using a wheel chair. It can also include public transit because every ride begins and ends with a walk. As each community is different, the citizens groups may have a slightly different focus, but all of them want to make their community a more walkable and engaging place. Visit Healthy Living Niagara's website ([www.healthyliving Niagara.com](http://www.healthyliving Niagara.com)) to see how to get involved in an active transportation committee in your community. Click on Programs, Active Transportation, and then on the "Supporting Active Transportation in Niagara: A guide for Groups Who Want to Improve Active Transportation". Within that guide there is a list of current citizens groups. The site also gives support to people who would like to create their own citizens group.

As an individual you can make a difference! Visit [www.iCANwalk.ca](http://www.iCANwalk.ca) to complete the on-line "How walkable is your community?" survey for a chance to win an iPod Nano. The information you send will be used to tell your local officials how they can support walking in your community. Together we can make all Niagara communities walkable, vibrant, people friendly places to live, shop and play in.

## Niagara Region Transit Service for All Ages and Abilities

By: Kumar Ranjan

2011

Getting around Niagara is a lot more age-friendly with the launch of regional Public Transit, the new inter-municipal transit service from the Niagara Region. Niagara residents and visitors of all ages and abilities can enjoy convenient and affordable transportation. This service is funded through a \$3.7 million grant from Niagara Region provided to the St. Catharines Transit Commission, Niagara Falls Transit and Welland Transit for the purchase of eight fully accessible buses for use on the Niagara Region Transit routes. In addition, Niagara Region will provide the estimated \$2.7 million yearly operating costs for the system.

Working with the municipal transit operators of St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Welland, along with Port Colborne and Fort Erie, Niagara Region Transit began operation in September. With this new transit service, residents can pay just a single fare to start their trip in one municipality, and end their trip in another all for one fare with free transfers.

For the introductory fare of just \$5, passengers can board any municipal transit bus in St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Welland, Thorold, Port Colborne or Fort Erie then continue to transfer to Niagara Region Transit buses, and then onto another local municipal transit system without having to pay any additional fares.

The Niagara Region Transit buses stop at major destinations including the St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Welland transit terminals, Niagara Regional Headquarters, the Seaway Mall, and the Pen Centre.

In addition to the new Niagara Region Transit routes, the existing feeder service route from Fort Erie to Niagara Falls, provided by Niagara Falls Transit, and the Port Colborne to Welland route, provided by Welland Transit, are both enhanced. The Fort Erie route now operates year round and on Saturdays, while the Port Colborne route now has additional daytime trips.

For more details on the transit system, including route maps, schedules and travel information visit the Niagara Region website or call at 905-685-4225 ext. 3467 or 1-800-263-7215 ext. 3467. Your comments and suggestions are welcome.

## Everyone is a Pedestrian

By: Virginia Stewart,

MA, Community Coordinator, Niagara's Age-Friendly Community project (2010-2013), Advocate for walkable communities

2010

An age-friendly community is one where people are likely to walk to nearby destinations. Throughout Niagara, as reported in the Age-Friendly Roundtable Conversations available from Niagara Connects, citizens expressed concern about their safety as pedestrians. Their concerns are legitimized in the 2012 Ontario Chief Coroner's Report. He found from a review of pedestrian fatalities those 65 years of age accounted for a "strikingly disproportionate share of fatalities based on their representation in the population. Seniors account for about 13.2% of the population, but 36% of the fatalities". With the shift in demographics in the next few years, the number of senior fatalities will climb.

The Coroner concludes that pedestrian deaths are the result of several behaviors - from vehicles speeding over the limit causing the most deaths, to pedestrians being distracted while walking a dog, pushing a shopping cart or using a cell phone resulting in the next most frequent causes of death. Also, in the review of the deaths it was found that many of the pedestrians were utilizing mobility aids, such as canes, walkers, crutches and wheelchairs. His report addresses pedestrian deaths in both rural and urban environments.

His 26 recommendations are framed within five core areas: leadership, legislation, engineering, education and enforcement. Among the Coroner's recommendations, supported by the World Health Organization Age-Friendly checklist, are:

- Lowering speed limits
- Improved pedestrian infrastructure, e.g. well-designed and well-placed crosswalks, pedestrian crossing "islands," raised crosswalks, audible pedestrian signals and sidewalk "bulb outs" (widened sidewalks that effectively narrow the road)
- Sidewalk amenities for pedestrians and those waiting for public transit, such as benches and recycling bins

The full report is available from the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services website.

If municipalities are serious about meeting the needs of seniors and all ages, we can start by making walking routes to their destinations safer. Walking is more than a stroll around the neighbourhood it is an integral part of our transportation system. All transportation trips start by walking; everyone is a pedestrian.

Learn more how you can make your community age-friendly with a focus on walking,  
<http://walkfriendly.ca/>.

## What is Old is New Again

By: Virginia Stewart,

MA, Former Community Coordinator, Niagara's Age-Friendly Community project (2010-2013), Advocate for walkable communities

2010

Listening to the lived experiences of many older adults conjures up that one familiar phrase: I remember when. "I remember travelling the NS&T, the Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, and Toronto Railway. Those were the days. We didn't need a car. We travelled the NS&T to work and places to play."

You say, "You haven't heard of the NS&T!" It was a major Niagara transportation system from 1888 up until 1959, when it shut down. There is a wonderful tribute to the NS&T - Final Run March 28th 1959 on YouTube.

The old idea of a Niagara transportation system is being revisited again as a priority for Regional Council; a new idea that could not happen soon enough for making Niagara an Age-Friendly Community. Mobility is critical to our older population who want to stay engaged in their community. Without a convenient means of transportation, many seniors will find themselves cut off from the life enriching programs offered by the recreation, arts and culture, and education sectors, activities that have filled their lives. Being isolated from these programs and services because non-driving options are not available undermines their quality of life resulting in a decline in their health.

Mobility is also critical for our kids. It is important for their development that they have an enabling and supportive environment rich with local recreation and arts and culture assets. Of utmost importance of course is getting to school. However, isn't it curious that the old idea of walking to school is now a new idea? It's a new entrepreneurial creative idea how to walk and bicycle school promoted by Active and Safe Routes to school, <http://www.saferoutestoschool.ca/>.

If you are interested in promoting safe routes to school you are supporting the foundational principles of an Age-Friendly Niagara. Better yet, if you are interested in reviving this old idea, contact Gary Murphy, Niagara School Travel Planning Steering Committee, [dxrgary@sympatico.ca](mailto:dxrgary@sympatico.ca). Do you have a local "remember when" transportation related story, a story to share with our readers? Or a story how the lack of transportation cuts off citizens from the life enriching programs important to quality of life? Contact the Community Coordinator for the Niagara Age-Friendly Community Initiative Project [agefriendly@niagararegion.ca](mailto:agefriendly@niagararegion.ca) or phone 905-685-1571 ext. 3252.



### The Perfect Senior Job

By: James Kershaw

2012

Age-Friendly is about encore careers for older adults. This sector of the economy has grown to 35% between 2001 and 2005, and there is no end in sight. For me, it was about being an active and healthy senior; and with that goal, I found myself the perfect job.

It wasn't much of an interview, and I didn't have to complete an application form or submit a resume. If my memory serves me correctly, I was asked for somebody's name as a reference, and I offered my wife's. The instructions were clear: be up at 5 a.m. to pick up the bundles then, deliver them to the houses that are on the list of customers.

Already guessed the job? You bet - Newspapers. It's an industry competing with the Internet and the online businesses that we hear so much about today. I've been a carrier for almost two years, delivering to mostly senior neighborhoods. Newspapers sell because seniors, as well as book lovers, in my opinion, prefer to have a tangible piece of writing in their hands instead of having to look at a computer screen.

The clouds are clearing as a few wakeful faces smile and reach for the news. Sometimes it's good, other times it's not. I've walked the same route so many times that it seems as though I've become part of the landscape with each customer anchored to his or her point in geography.

I must remember to get good boots for the winter, and light shorts for the summer; how's that for a wardrobe? Once a week, the big paper gets my secretary (the car) going that cheerful extra mile.

Something about routine is so entrenched. We expect something to happen at a certain time. We look forward to it, like that first robin's song. We've waited so long. We deserve it. And we will have it! And if it only means reaching into a mailbox, it's worth the wait. With that in mind it's early to bed and early to rise. . .

## Resigning

By: James Kershaw

2013

It's been two and a half years of the same routine: Rise and shine at 5:20 a.m., pick up and unbundle the papers off the sidewalk (if I'm lucky to find them there), put half of them in my bag and the other half in my car for later.

For the first hour I visit 30 homes and afterwards deliver the remaining twenty to another section of the neighbourhood. This didn't include frequent shortages. Even though bundles are wrapped with clear plastic some papers were soaked from rain. Street lamps and the moon are good early morning lights illuminating a crisp January snowfall; but when there is no snow try slipping on black ice in the dark. Risers can be treacherous and 99% of deliveries include a minimum of six steps up and down. City snowploughs get most of their work done early mornings after a storm. These monsters can move tons of snow in a second. When it's dark along the side streets, they'll creep up out of nowhere when you least expect it. Frantically, I scrambled out of the way of one of these beasts once before he threw his prey all over the sidewalk.

Invariably, walkways never get ploughed and the snow turns to ice making the neighbourhoods impassible for pedestrians such as myself. Fear of falling is a major factor that keeps seniors indoors and environments such as this aggravate those who suffer from osteoporosis as they are unable to exercise due to weather conditions. Inevitably my math homework came due: Two hours a day for 30 days equals 60 hours per month divided by 200 dollars take home. That's about a third of the minimum hourly wage. I hear they can't find people to fill the position.