Making It Happen

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Alberta Caregiver’s Association

This fall the Alberta Caregivers Association will launch three valuable new programs. The first is the Community Caregiver program, which will be promoted through senior centres and the Eldercare Academy (a partnership with SAGE and Norquest College). The program provides intensive exploration of key issues of the caregiver’s agenda and is full of important information for and about the caregiver journey.

Also offered is a three-day training program available in November to senior-centre staff or their key volunteers. The course would train your staff or volunteer how to assess a caregiver’s needs and then provide assistance to them to meet their needs and resolve their issues. The program is called “Certified Caregiver Advisor” and it helps give senior-serving staff (or key volunteers) the information necessary to pass on to caregivers in contact with your agency.

Happy Senior Centre Month!

In the United States September is Senior Center Month. The Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council is a member of the National Council on Aging (NCOA) which is an American organization that spearheads advocacy efforts and develops programs and initiatives that contribute to health, independence and the continuing contributions of senior citizens. We belong because the NCOA has made many strides in the senior sector and we feel we can learn from some of these developments. Here is an interesting excerpt from their promotional material: "The Senior Center as we know it today was first introduced in New York City in 1943 to provide social activities, nutritious meals and case management to adults aged 60 and older, particularly those with low incomes. Sixty-four years later, senior centers are
For the past month I have been visiting member organizations to understand the issues of your members/clientele and the issues of your agency. I have heard numerous times that affordable, safe housing is a real worry for seniors and that the supports for maintaining independence to stay in their homes are expensive and hard to find. Adding to this is a shortage of respite care for seniors who are being looked after by loved ones and caregiver burnout. Lack of adequate transportation came up repeatedly—especially the need for accompanied transportation. Income support and the gap between pensions vs. the actual cost of living here in Edmonton is also an issue for many seniors.

The most worrisome issue for agencies I’ve met with so far is wages/benefits for staff. Many agencies are having a hard time recruiting and retaining employees because the wages are not in-keeping with other sectors in the province. We are collecting your stories on this issue and will offer them to two initiatives that are underway in the not-for-profit sector: 1) WhoCaresAlberta.com which is a coalition of networks that represent community organizations who assist families in crisis and 2) the Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations who are organizing a Non-Profit Human Resource Strategy. Let us know if we can use your agency’s name if we get calls from the media regarding this issue. We’d also like to know if someone from your agency would be willing to talk to the media if a request was made for a front-line agency worker.

A labor market shortage affects many of the home services that agencies have been offering to seniors and that drives up the cost of the service which ultimately affects the senior. Funding is also a big issue as is volunteer recruitment. A few agencies expressed a worry that they require more programming space and a couple are worried that they may have to move their agency to another location.

We plan to use all this information in presentations that we are asked to make and we also plan to compile a briefing which will be sent to all the candidates that are running in the civic election this fall.
Cultural Sensitivity Training Session

Interagency outreach workers and other key staff and volunteers from senior-serving agencies attended a May 11, 2007 cultural sensitivity training session sponsored by the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council. The one-day event was facilitated by Maureen Gross of the intercultural education program of Catholic Social Services. Twenty-six participants considered the demographics of Alberta and the make-up of our society and how that impacts services and programs delivered to seniors.

Outreach workers can often be a first point of contact for an immigrant or refugee senior. The session provided workers and others with cultural information and challenged participants to think about their own sense of self as well as other characteristics of culture. Maureen pointed out that all aspects of culture are interrelated and to change one part is to change the whole. She noted the ten characteristics of culture and invited participants to consider how differences in each of these areas affect how people interrelate:

- Sense of self and space
- Communication style and language
- Dress and appearance
- Food and feeding habits
- Time and time consciousness
- Relationships
- Values and norms
- Beliefs and attitudes
- Mental process and learning
- Work habits and practices

By the end of the day participants were applying principles to case studies and evaluations indicated that the day was very helpful and enlightening. The group requested more information about resources that are available to agencies to help them be more responsive to the needs of culturally diverse seniors.
The third program is called Compass for Caregivers. This 8-part workshop focuses on the caregiver and addresses key issues to help them feel supported throughout the changes they will experience along the caregiving journey. It invites the caregiver to recognize the need to care for themselves and to recognize the value of that they are doing.

For each of these programs the Alberta Caregivers Association will train facilitators to offer the workshops.

“Caregivers provide approximately 80 per cent of all home care to seniors living in the community and up to 30 per cent of services to seniors living in institutions,” says Alberta Caregivers Association President Peter Kossowan. In a meeting with the Standing Policy Committee on Health, Kossowan advocated, “With 70 per cent of caregivers being employed, the importance of workplace supports was one of the key points addressed as well as the need for respite.”

The Alberta Caregivers Association was founded in 2001 to give support to the thousands of Albertans who are caregivers. They provide information, education, networking and advocacy for family caregivers. They also provide recreation programs, resources, education sessions and conferences for caregivers. One of their education programs is called COMPASS (Caregiver Orientation for Mobilizing Personal Assets and Strengths through Self-Care). There are opportunities for staff and key volunteers of senior-serving agencies to learn to facilitate this program as well.

The organization is in the process of adapting some of its
Board Chairs and Executive Directors Meeting

October 2, 9 a.m.-Noon at the Ital-Canadian Seniors Association 9111 – 110 Ave.
We will have two speakers.

One from Millard Health about a source for staff for your agency. Funded by WCB, Millard Health prepares people for re-employment and offers incentives for employers.

The other presentation will be on insurance risk management. An expert will be there to answer your questions.

All senior-serving organizations are encouraged to send representatives to this meeting.

Please RSVP to executivedirector@seniorscouncil.net or call for information.

educational materials to be used for immigrant seniors. Earle Waugh is an educational consultant and Reena Shimoga is a Masters in Social Work student. They both work with Brenda Higham, the Executive Director of the Association. Brenda is herself pursuing a PhD in Caregiving and has years of experience and education to support the association. This past year the association relocated to Pilgrim’s Hospice and have partnered with this organization regarding respite and volunteer support. To find out more about the Alberta Caregivers Association or to participate in one of their programs, contact one of the staff at 453-5088 or visit their website at http://www.albertacaregiversassociation.org.

The Older Adult Committee of Active Edmonton (including David Loper) and the equally moving crowd at the end of the Year of the Older Adult celebration.

I think senior centres in Edmonton have evolved over the years as well and are no longer just for recreation and...
socialization. Many valuable services are available through these community based resources. The ESCC is coordinating a joint advertising DVD for Edmonton Senior Centres this fall, to be used to promote senior centres. We need help to develop this resource and invite your centre to become involved. Staff or key volunteers are welcome to join our planning committee—contact Sheila Hallett at ESCC (423-5635) if you are interested. We will schedule a meeting (in October) and notify all who have expressed interest. Let us know by the end of September if you or someone from your agency wants to join the committee.

Staff or key volunteers are encouraged to join the planning committee.

Contact Sheila Hallett at ESCC (423-5635) if you are interested. First meeting is in October.

Janice Monfries, Executive Director of the Westend Seniors Activity Centre, and Sheila Hallett, ESCC, both sat in on a web conference put on by the National Institute of Senior Centers (part of the NCOA). The topic was “Trends in Senior Consumer Values.” Part of this presentation was about perceptions of senior centres from a survey that was conducted by a research group in USA. The presentation emphasized how attitudes towards aging have changed and therefore services need to change. Today’s seniors are connected, urban consumers and they want choices. The study talked about retirement as “your power years” and how today’s older adults are interested in lifelong learning, engaging in the world and embracing wellness. While some of the information seemed less relevant for Canadian seniors, it provided good food for thought.

If you would like to see the PowerPoint presentation from this webinar, contact executivedirector@seniorscouncil.net and I will e-mail a copy to you. (The file is 2.77 MB so you would need to have a high-speed connection).
Community Partnerships for Seniors in Immigrant and Refugee Communities

In response to the request for more resource information in the area of cultural diversity, the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council has submitted a proposal to the New Horizons for Seniors Program to develop the tools to give to senior-serving agencies to allow them to respond to the needs in their communities. We are being helped in this effort by the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Catholic Social Services and the Multicultural Health Brokers. As we prepare for this project, we were asked by conference coordinators connected with Alberta Seniors and Community Supports to put together a workshop which addresses the needs of immigrant and refugee seniors for the Sept. 20-21 Seniors Services Conference. Our workshop, “Bicultural Bifocals”, will take place on Friday, September 21 at 1:15 p.m. for one hour.

The tools development project, called “Community Partnerships for Seniors in Immigrant and Refugee Communities”, will involve a searchable database, a published resource guide listing (and mapping) local ethnic communities, some cultural cue information, and referral information for help with translation, cultural sensitivity training, etc. It would also include some research and best practices.

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One Volunteer—Jean Innes
At the present time I am only serving on two other committees (beside the ESCC Board) both with Capital Health, Edmonton. I chair a committee entitled Consumer Advisory Committee on Specialized Geriatric Services. The goals of this committee are to help integrate seniors’ priorities in policy and practice, to stimulate review and improvement of service delivery, to provide feedback on the effective modes of education for family caregivers and the public at large and to provide advice on the effective dissemination of key messages to the community. As a committee we are accountable to The Regional Geriatric Program Council. We function largely to integrate consumer views in the planning and implementation of specialized geriatric services as well as to advocate on behalf of seniors and to make recommendations to the Regional Council on priority areas and emerging issues. We meet quarterly and our members are consumer representatives (seniors or family members of seniors) from urban, suburban and rural communities within Capital Health. We have administrative staff resource people and we can assign ex-officio members as required. All of our members are long standing participants of volunteer work with seniors and in this particular group are retired professionals including doctors,

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nurses, social workers and others.

The second committee I serve on is a work in progress committee, which is an initiative to make recommendations on an integrated service model for rehabilitation services in Capital Health and to identify strategic priorities for rehabilitation services in the region.

These two committees plus the Coordinating Council make up the bulk of my activities. I do participate in other activities including focus groups and selected activities related to senior advocacy.

I enjoy all of my volunteer work particularly because I work and enjoy the partnership of others and their contributions to the overall Edmonton community. Submitted by Jean Innes

Finding Firmer Ground: Support Intervention Preferences of Immigrant Seniors

Researchers at the University of Alberta are in the middle of a study called “Finding Firmer Ground: Support Intervention Preferences of Immigrant Seniors” and this work will be of great assistance to senior-serving organizations as you grapple with how to be more responsive to the needs of immigrant and refugee seniors in Edmonton. The study is being led by Dr. Miriam Stewart of the Social Support Research Program of the CIHR Institute of Gender and Health in the Faculty of Nursing.

Researchers have completed phase one of the study which interviewed immigrant seniors (men and women) about their support needs, their coping strategies, and their preferences for support interventions. Seniors were from the Chinese, Afro-Caribbean, former Yugoslavian, and Spanish-speaking communities. Phase two of the study reached out to community agencies that serve seniors to obtain your views on support interventions that could enable immigrant seniors to cope with challenges associated with aging and migration.

Focus groups were held with community agencies that serve seniors in mid September. If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dr. Stewart at 492-3632, or Habiba at 492-8027 or email mhabiba@ualberta.ca. This study will benefit all as it leads to understanding important issues affecting elderly immigrants in Canada.
Transportation: The Key Factor for Aging in Place

Transportation is integral for seniors who want to be able to stay in their homes in the community and age in place. Isolation can result if there is not access to adequate transportation and health can be negatively impacted. The Seniors’ Transportation Steering Committee agreed that transportation and health are linked very closely and there is lots of work to be done to make Edmonton a more senior friendly city.

The committee has been meeting regularly since January 2007 to move the priority issues identified at the Seniors’ Transportation Roundtable (Nov. 2006) to action. Seven recommendations were submitted to the City of Edmonton Community Services Committee September 4, 2007 and City Council will consider these recommendations at budget time. Included in the recommendations is to gather and synthesize all the relevant seniors’ transportation research that exists and house this information in one place. We propose to make ESCC a clearinghouse for what is available: best practice research, statistics, etc. A database is proposed to help people find information they need and a social marketing campaign is recommended to make sure information gets to where it needs to go.

One major gap in seniors’ transportation involves accompanied transportation for the frail elderly. Many seniors require help getting from point A to B, but also require someone to stay with them during that time. This need is being met in a very limited way through volunteer driving programs. These programs simply cannot meet the demand and demographics suggest the situation will only get worse. The steering committee recommends a new model be developed and piloted to compliment these volunteer driving programs.

Other recommendations involve the coordination of planners—urban planners, developers, healthcare planners, transportation planners, etc. There needs to be an awareness of senior friendly concepts and planners need to work with each other instead of independently. In other words there needs to be some coordination of planning!

Two recommendations involve expanding a travel training
The steering committee also recommended another transportation roundtable be held to update people on the work in the past year and to advance other work. On November 29th the ESCC together with the Alberta Motor Association (AMA) will co-host one more Seniors Transportation Roundtable. The event will be held at the Greenwood Inn (4485 Gateway Boulevard) from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. It will provide **Key Strategic Updates** on our work as well as presentations of some **Innovative Models** being found elsewhere in Canada to address the challenges of transportation for seniors. We will expand our thinking beyond transportation to planning liveable communities. If you have not received an e-mail about this event, contact David Loper, Member Services Coordinator for the ESCC at 423-5635 or memberservices@seniorscouncil.net

Three members of the Seniors’ Transportation Steering Committee attended the Calgary Roundtable on Seniors’ Transportation on June 14, 2007. The event highlighted local efforts to solve problems and challenged participants to find more ways to make improvements.

One of the breakout sessions featured an example of how a Calgary Senior Centre has responded to the issue. Confederation Park Senior Centre brings about 80 seniors to its centre weekly by cab to participate in a program that features social interaction and entertainment. The ride is free for the senior and the Centre picks up the cost of the cabs. (About 24 cabs bill the centre each week for mileage only, no waiting time charged.) The monthly cab bills from the various companies amount to about $600 and this is paid for using casino funds from the Centre. If a senior lives more
than 25 km away (round trip) then they are asked to contribute $10 towards their ride.

The centre also receives donations to the cab fund and have had a large bequeath to that fund as well. Each week seniors call in by a certain time to indicate that they wish to attend that week. They are added to a list and then a staff person generates a pick up list and calls to arrange the rides. Each cab picks up about four seniors and then brings them to the centre.

Another interesting program that has been piloted in Calgary involves the use of shuttle vans from motor dealers in the city. This program was not featured at the Calgary Roundtable because its official launch had not taken place. The program was successfully launched on July 17th and it will be featured at our Edmonton Roundtable on November 29th.

Many of the issues identified in Edmonton emerged as priorities at the Calgary Roundtable, such as the need for social marketing and centralized information provision. Calgary contacts will be invited to our Edmonton Roundtable and opportunities to work together be explored. Stay tuned.

If you would like to be involved in our tool development project as part of the planning committee, we would welcome your input. Please contact Sheila Hallett at 423-5635 at ESCC and you’ll be added to the contact list to receive meeting notices. This work will also open the avenue for a consultation team to be formed that can tackle some of the issues and barriers that immigrant and refugee seniors face here in Edmonton. There are lots of exciting opportunities to make a difference and you can expect to hear more as time goes on.

Children's Logic: "Give me a sentence about a public servant," said a teacher. The small boy wrote: "The fireman came down the ladder pregnant." The teacher took the lad aside to correct him. "Don't you know what pregnant means?" she asked. "Sure," said the young boy confidently. "It means carrying a child."