Striving to Thrive – Evolution of Senior Centres

The Future is Now, the Evolution will Continue…

Presented by Janice Monfries
September 2012
Based on information from:

- participation at international conferences on aging
- City of Edmonton initiatives
- Edmonton Seniors Coordinating council projects and....
- experiences gained from working in management and as Executive Director of a Senior center for many years
Strategic Considerations for Meeting the Changing Needs of Seniors

- Image of Senior Centre in the Community
  - The Past Vs the Present (The Future is Now!)

- Structure of the Organization – Board relations, staffing, standard of services, quality and quantity of programs,

- Partnerships and Community Linkages and their role in the evolvement of senior centres.
How Is your Senior Centre Perceived in the Community?

Will this image attract the next generation of seniors?
Our Centre 12 years ago
Senior centres in the past – Common Characteristics

- Small
- Not always easily accessible
- Catering to small segment of seniors-usually older seniors
- Administrative Boards rather than Governing Policy Boards
- Limited staff
- Mostly offer drop in activities
- Very limited programming

*These Drop in – Senior centres serve mainly as a place for seniors to informally gather*
It’s good to recognize the benefits of smaller drop in centres

But it’s better to try to incorporate the benefits of these centres into facilities that provide:

*more options for a larger proportion of seniors.*
Projecting an image of fragility and charity vs. engagement and excitement – what will attract the most seniors?

- To continue to evolve centres need to find ways to attract all “stages” of seniors – from the active and unique baby boomers – to the older more frail seniors.

- **Projecting an image that attracts all seniors – is important!**
How Is Your Center Perceived in the Community? Focusing on Your Image

What is your *NORTH STAR?*

What draws people into your centre?

- Finish this sentence… “Our centre is the place to be for…….”

*Resource: The Central: [www.centralareasseniiorcenter.org](http://www.centralareasseniiorcenter.org)*
*Resource: Jill Jackson Ledford jjacksonledford@gmail.com*
Westend Seniors Activity Centre – Our Mission

“To be a community based hub for seniors providing services, programs, information and activities that support the healthy and active aging of seniors.”
Our Vision – To Become a Hub!

• “a central place that injects ..vitality…into local neighbourhoods…. Hubs are places that help turn communities into vibrant urban villages”. ISS Strategy – City of Edmonton 2001.

...to be the heartbeat of the community for seniors, to be part of an Age Friendly Community.
Our Senior Centre – Positioned for the Future...

Westend Seniors Activity Centre - A Community Hub
Senior Centres, Strategically Evolving, Moving Forward........

- Senior centres need to adopt professional business models that focus on attracting, engaging and energizing seniors in their retirement years.

- It’s important that programs be responsive to the changing needs of seniors.

- Focus on being a Seniors Wellness Centre – Ensure you have a sophisticated mind/body centered centre with evidenced based programs and services that responds to different needs of seniors from the baby boomers to the older frailer segment.

  Sheryl Fuller: Educational Alliance, USA
Business Planning 101-
-Using your Strategic Plan

- Your Plan should be something you use all the time to guide you forward.

- When you close your eyes, you should be able to conjure up a mental vision of your center and be able to name your mission without hesitation.

- Your values should correctly reflect what you stand for?

- And you need to make sure you complete a comprehensive analysis of your organization—identifying what you do, who you do it for, how much it costs and how you plan to achieve and maintain success.

- Resource: www.crossroadsncoa.org
Questions to Ask ....

• Have you been attracting new seniors to your centre?

• Has your centre grown both in the numbers of seniors you serve and the services you offer?

• Do you have the capacity and the ability to review, revise and enhance your services according to the current needs of seniors?

• Have you connected to the community – what partnerships have you developed?
It's good to evaluate how you are doing today.

But it's just as important to look ahead and prepare for the future.
Not Your Grandmother’s Senior Centre - Creating a 21st Century Model

Today’s senior centres must be multi-service, vibrant places - not only a place to gather but a place to gain skills, resources and connections.
Your Centre has to be willing to make changes as needed.

“Progress always involves risks-
You can’t steal second base and keep your foot on first base.”

- Frederick B. Wilcox
The Past

The Future
What Does an Age Friendly Senior Centre look like?

- Multipurpose Lifestyle centre
- Curb Appeal
- Accessible
- Multiple Programs /Partners
- Part of an Age Friendly Community
Senior Centre – Is Your Organization Structured Appropriately?
The Structure of Your Senior Centre

Senior Centres have to be run more like a business

You need:

- a Board governance that focuses on policies not administration.
- skilled resources, including sufficient staffing support.
- a standard levels of service for programs and activities
- effective volunteer programs
- partnerships in the Community
## The Board and Staff Partnership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Executive Director</th>
<th>Board</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Future</td>
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<table>
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(www.edmonton.ca/seniors)
Senior Centres should provide 6 core services (identified by the City of Edmonton)

Core 1 – Social Services

Core 2 – Recreational Programs

Core 3 – Nutrition Services

Core 4 – Health and Wellness

Core 5 – Community Development

Core 6 – Volunteerism Opportunities

How Would Your Centre Rank?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seniors’ Centre Name</th>
<th>Core 1</th>
<th>Core 2</th>
<th>Core 3</th>
<th>Core 4</th>
<th>Core 5</th>
<th>Core 6</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Jewish Senior Citizens’ Centre</td>
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<td>Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton (SAGE)</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Citizens Opportunity Neighbourhood Association (SCONA)</td>
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<td>3.5</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Southeast Edmonton Seniors Association (SEESA)</td>
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<td>Southwest Seniors Outreach Society</td>
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<td>3</td>
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What Else Was Asked?

- Centres were asked to report on:
  - Hours of Operation
  - Number of seniors per day
  - Number of hours facility is rented out
  - Geographic location of our seniors
  - Number of programs offered....

Why Is This Information Important?

- These statistics help you in your planning – but they also are measures that funders begin to look at.

What Do Your Statistics Reveal About Your Centre?
All this information helps identify the value you offer at your centre

- If you don’t provide the core services – don’t ask why – ask why not- it’s time to find a way to do this.

- When you apply for grants – you are competing for dollars – you need to be able to show that you can provide value added services.

- By expanding on the quality and quantity of your programs/services – you are able to attract a greater number of seniors and potentially funders!
Accreditation of Senior Centres - a way of ensuring high standards of services for seniors.

- In the United States, senior centre can apply to be accredited.
- To advance the quality of senior centers nationwide, NISC (National Institute of Senior Centres) has developed nine standards of excellence for senior center operations. These standards serve as a guide for all senior centers to improve their operations today — and position themselves for the future.
- They utilize two components – self assessment and peer review.
  - Resource: Senior Center Accreditation – Dianne Stone – Newington Senior Center
Your customers’ needs could be changing – are you aware of this?

Are you noticing new trends?

Are you positioned to attract the next generation of seniors?

Do you really understand the unique needs of your customers?
How Seniors are Changing – A Snapshot ...

- Seniors today are much more active – and aware of what they need to do to delay the aging process
  - “60 is the new forty”
  - “To me old age is always fifteen years older than I am”. - Bernard Baruch

- People under age 70 (on average) – do not consider themselves to be a senior (except when it provides them with a discount.)

- Seniors undergo many transitions – job status, marital status, living status, health status – their needs are always changing.
Latest trends in Programming - Recognizing the Different Stages of Retirement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Age range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baby boomers</td>
<td>55-75 years (May Be Semi-Retired)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle age senior</td>
<td>76-85 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Senior</td>
<td>86 and up</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Why do we categorize seniors?

There are different programming and activity needs geared to the different stages.

Each subset requires some modifications to their program offerings.

There are aging issues that become more common in the later years.
Older Seniors (85 years and up)

- Leisure activities more important
- Drop in activities preferred over longer registered programs.
- Activities that engage the senior – allowing them a chance to speak and be heard are important
- Simple but engaging activities are important – card games, carpet bowling, wii games
- Physical limitations become determining factors – common diminishment in hearing, mobility and balance.
How old is this senior?
Middle Age Seniors (over 75 years)

- Fitness programs must be adaptable to address such chronic aging conditions as arthritis, heart issues, etc. (need modified programs using chairs etc.)

- Seniors prefer more drop in activities and less long term registered programs (4 weeks maximum).

- Health and wellness important – increasing balance, memory etc.

- Physical impairments play a role in planning activities
Baby Boomers (young seniors)
Age 65-75

- Programs and activities need to be *current and relevant*

- Activity level ranges from low to very high

- Programs, classes and activities need to include brain fitness

- Health and Wellness are important

- Lifelong learning is important

- Hours of Operation may been to be flexible to respond to semi retired seniors
Baby Boomers - They’re Your Present and Your Future – and They Have Started to Arrive! Are You Ready?

- This age group will challenge the senior centres the most!
- They won’t accept the “old” senior centres”
- They will be very selective in their involvement
- They will want to be involved in decision making
- They will be intolerant of age-related labels.
- They will want to be challenged
- They will want to network
Helping You Stay Current – Your Community!

Building Partnerships and Connecting with Your Community – Important Aspect of Evolving to Thrive!
What Can Connecting to Your Community Do for Your Evolvement as an Organization?

- Image update
- Building of resources
- Gain of community support
- Expansion of your customer base

Tools for the Trade
Rennie Cohen / Jean Williams
ASA/NCOA Conference
San Francisco 2011
Connect the Community to the Centre and the Centre to the Community
How To Connect to Your Community and Build Partnerships?

- Engage Your Community
- Explore Common Goals
- Elevate Your Profile
- Participate in Joint Initiatives
Outcome Benefits of Connecting to the community.

- Increased public awareness
- Increased community profile
- Increased community support
- Increased utilization rates
- Increased revenue streams
Benefits to the Community:

Creation of Age Friendly Neighbourhoods

Access to additional services

Opportunities for Partnership and Shared Services

Value Added Resource for the Community!
What Makes Westend Seniors A Community Hub?

- **Strong Community Profile** - *Top of Mind Recognition*

- **Expanded Services and Programs** – *One stop shop for Seniors*

- **Community Focused** – *Place where the community can meet, day or night – (old and young)*

- **Outreach services** – *Social supports, resource information*

- **Partnerships** – *With community groups, service providers*

- **Curb Appeal/Accessible** – *On public transportation route, walking distance to senior’s residences, store front operation.*
Examples of Connecting With the Community

- Offering evening programs for all ages
  - Tae Kwon Do
  - Dance classes
  - Community Meeting
  - Weekend Church rentals
  - Weekend Wedding Rentals

AT WSAC — every evening and Weekend the facility is utilized by Seniors, Community and other organizations
Examples of Partnering in a Senior Centre – Westend Seniors Activity Centre

**Eldercare – Adult Day Support Program**

- Program runs daily within the senior centre – active seniors take part in activity centre – loved ones needing more support take part in Adult Day programs. – Value added benefit to seniors and to both organizations!

**Alberta Health**- Flu Campaign (8 weeks), Health/Wellness programming
Other Joint Initiatives

ASSIST – Multicultural programming

- Rental of programming space/joint programming to integrate multicultural seniors into the centre
- Celebrating Seniors –
- Badminton Tournament - ASSIST vs WSAC
Honor the Aged and the Wise
- The Chinese Way

...cordially invite

to

Full-day authentic Chinese programs!
Chinese Meditation Technique
Write your name in Chinese Calligraphy
Chinese Tai Chi Fan
Chinese Craft
Chinese Vegetarian Food

and more Surprises!!!!!!
Collaborations

Working with:

- Municipal, Provincial, Federal Government
- Other senior servicing agencies
- Academic Institutions – Schools, Colleges, Universities
  Taking on practicum students
  Hosting meets/worships etc.

Become the Heartbeat of your Community!
What Does a Senior centre look like today?

It may be different than you think and it will continually change and evolve according to the needs of seniors.
Senior Centres

• “Senior centres are not places just where older adults come to fill time. Senior centres are a connection to a new direction in life.”

  - Bob Pitman – Exec. Director - Senior Center Services of Bartholomew County, IN

• Thank you

  - Janice Monfries - Executive Director – West End Seniors Activity Centre