



ACA News

Spring 2016 | Vol. 49 No. 2

Helping Others

Alberta Council on Aging

Working to improve the quality of life for seniors

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Box 9 11808 St. Albert Trail, Edmonton AB, T5L 4G4

Mission Statement

Our mission is to improve the quality of life for seniors and encourage their participation in all aspects of community by educating seniors and the public and by advising government.

Editor & Publisher

Alberta Council on Aging

On the Cover

Esther Braden (1924-2016)
amongst her dahlias at
Prosperous Lake, near
Yellowknife.

Photo by Bill Braden



For nearly 50 years,
volunteers have been serving
on behalf of the council. All
volunteers, whether board
members, regional executives
or general workers are the
heart and the soul of this
organization. You are valued
and appreciated.

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Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of Alberta Council on Aging. The council reserves the right to condense, rewrite, and reject material. This newsletter follows the Senior Friendly™ principles for clear communications.

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Members:

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Alberta Council on Aging	Phone: 780.423.7781
Box 9, 11808 St. Albert Trail	Toll Free: 1.888.423.9666
Suite 232, Circle Square Plaza	Fax: 780.425.9246
Edmonton, AB T5L 4G4	info@acaging.ca

President's Report:

Ah spring, that time of year when all hearts dream of warm sunshine, BBQ's and family visits. I saw a saying on Face Book the other day that said "have you called your parents? Call them now." And this got me thinking, have you called your children, grandchildren? Maybe you should do that now that spring is here. Make plans for this warmer weather and those delicious BBQ's.

Alberta Council on Aging has had a very busy winter, communicating with governments both provincial and federal.

Dr. David Swan had a piece in the Edmonton Journal about seniors not responding to the tax rebate program. I sent a letter to the editor rebutting this remark. I researched and wrote a newsletter article on the traps of the Property Tax Deferral program. We agree with the call to review this program and ask for the Property Tax Rebate (a grant rather than loan) to be reinstated.

We work from both a strategic and business plan. These plans are visited each board meeting and brought up to date or adjusted/added to as necessary to keep the work current. A recent change to the strategic plan was to add Elder Abuse to our talking points/current priorities. We have created an awareness program for seniors called Recognizing Abuse. There are so many ways that seniors can be abused either intentionally or inadvertently. Governments and industry are also often guilty of the unintentional abuse of seniors. Remember the terms "bed blockers" and "gray tsunami"? The list of inappropriate labels is long.

Recently Camrose and District Support Services launched a manual entitled "Supports for the Journey." The manual is about planning for your senior years and accessing essential programs and services. Included is a comprehensive list of agencies and contact information for the Camrose area. Every community in Alberta should have a similar tool!

Lastly, I want to add a few words about a project I am keen on implementing. I would like to see Linking the Generations, a Senior Friendly™ program be revitalized and readily available. Regions 2, 6 and 9 have activities that center around connecting younger and older people in a meaningful way. Let's see this become a way of life, as it once was.

I hope to see you at the AGM in Calgary. Stay Safe. Protect yourself and your assets! And stay connected... make that call today!

Respectfully submitted,

Fred Olsen



Nick Chrapko, Fred Olsen, Dwayne Hlady, and Lars Hallstrom at the Supports for the Journey launch.

Executive Director's Report: Helping Others

Recently a friend used the term **the bonus years** to describe the stage in life when we are older- 65 plus. I love this expression as it speaks to the privilege of aging and at Alberta Council on Aging we know that just living longer is not the point. Quality of life goes hand in hand with longevity.

In this issue, we focus on the various ways seniors are helping others. On the front cover is Esther Braden, who before her recent passing was a resident of Yellowknife. I met Esther while employed by the Alzheimer Society of Alberta and Northwest Territories. Already in her late eighties, Esther was an active advocate and volunteer for older persons. She was the one who toured me about Yellowknife, connected me with people and organizations that would be allies in raising awareness around the need for programs and services for people affected by dementia. Although significant hearing loss challenged Esther, she led weekly music therapy sessions in the lodge and long term care facility.

This summer, while visiting my niece, I had the opportunity to meet up once again with Esther. I could see her health was failing, and I witnessed the tender support her family was providing for her, within her place of residence. Esther and I had a brief discussion about advocacy. Esther, who supported the work of Alberta Council on Aging, stated how important it is to share of yourself and your assets if possible. She imparted her recipe for successful advocacy: expect change to happen, raise only a few issues at a time, be respectful and vigilant. Esther was awarded the Order of Canada

in 2006 for her longstanding contribution toward helping others. Her family asked that instead of flowers, her mourners would give of themselves to a cause in which they believe.

Sophia Yaqub of the Multicultural Woman and Senior Services Association is another senior to behold. You need only spend a few minutes in her company to understand how far reaching her service to others is. When we were delivering a program on Senior Friendly™/Age friendly others would make comments about her such as- she is an angel.

Alberta Council on Aging members Lesley and Linda, also new to the senior age category, share their deeply personal stories to help others. Sometimes it takes great courage to be an advocate. You cannot help but think how the bonus years could be used just to have fun, to avoid controversy and conflict, however, many older people share the mission of having fun **and** helping others. This just may be one of the secrets to longevity.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Durand



Multicultural Woman and Seniors Services Association

Greetings From our Community Outreach Coordinator

Our Community Outreach Program is well underway, and the response so far has been fantastic, with emails and phone calls about booking ACA to come and do a wide variety of presentations. As the new outreach coordinator, I have begun setting up outreach events across Alberta. We've been working close to our head office in Edmonton, but we have upcoming presentations booked as far south as Coutts.

In February, Diana Anderson presented Recognizing Fraud in Vermilion and Kitscoty, while March saw Donna and myself presenting Recognizing Fraud at the University of Alberta and Senior Friendly™/Age Friendly for the Multicultural Women and Senior Services Association in Edmonton.

I look forward to meeting all of you. Maybe at our AGM in June, the Casino in July, or on one of our many trips around the province.

Respectfully submitted,
Laureen Guldbrandsen

For seniors to enjoy a good quality of life it is important to know what programs and resources are available.



Community Outreach Program

This program is designed to partner with our regional volunteers and communities to better reach our members and older persons across the province. Aging in community is highly valued by seniors, and Alberta Council on Aging is committed to bringing presentations and resources to your community at little or no cost to participants.

Which presentation would be of most interest to your community?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Friendly™/Age Friendly | <input type="checkbox"/> Let's Talk Dementia |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizing Fraud | <input type="checkbox"/> Pharmacy Tips for Seniors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre and Post Retirement Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigating for Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recognizing Elder Abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> Seniors Forum - We'd like to hear from you! |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living Stronger Longer | |



Edmonton Raging Grannies



We were delighted to meet the Raging Grannies at the start of this year. We enjoyed lunch together at Louise Swift's home. Louise has been an active citizen and activist for many years and is one of the pioneers of this group. Incidentally, Louise Swift was also an active member of the Alberta Council on Aging for many years, and we are honoured to have her back as a member! We provided an overview of Alberta Council on Aging for those who did

not know about our work.

They serenaded us with one of their recent songs as we settled in to hear about how the Grannies live out their mission.

At the introduction of one of their many songbooks, The Edmonton Raging Grannies describe themselves as a loving group of grandmothers who carry a serious message about the dangers threatening our planet. Through songs (often familiar singalong tunes with the group's edited lyrics), the Grannies raise awareness of issues related to peace and disarmament, environment and social justice.

We queried who can become a member, and the answer was membership is open to women who are like minded and willing to challenge the status quo. They do not necessarily need to be literal grandmothers. They promote the concept of intentional communities and enjoy a social support network that is key to their wellbeing.

There are many chapters of Raging Grannies throughout North America. They were first formed in 1992 by a group of female street performers from Victoria B.C. The Raging Grannies were protesting the alarming storage of nuclear warheads at the harbour. The Edmonton group, closely linked with the Victoria Grannies, was soon formed. Their first action was to protest the clear-cut logging of Clayoquot Sound, B.C.

According to the Edmonton Grannies, former premier Ralph Klein once said the suspension of his government's health plan proposal "The Third Wave" was due to the opposition of NDP **and** the Raging Grannies!

These media sweethearts draw attention through an identifiable look the public might associate with “granny”. There is an irony in their costuming, and most importantly they want to be flamboyant, stand out and be recognizable. Some grannies wear aprons and bonnets; some do not. “You can’t tell a grannie how to look!” emphatically announces one of the members. When required, the grannies will assemble, occupy, demonstrate, speak their minds, call to question government and corporations. Their communication style is their signature- they sing songs that are on track with the issues at hand. When asked what their current talking points are, the group exercised their democracy and took turns stating what they believe are the “burning issues”:

- What programs are available to Albertan seniors and why are these programs kept secret?
- Dental health is not universally covered. Why not? Dental health is imperative to overall good health!
- Insist politicians keep their promises and make them accountable - from provincial tourism programs to the federal government’s decision to continue to sell arms to Saudi Arabia
- Keep home care publicly funded and regulated for all citizens
- Ensure public health care, a fundamental human right, is a continuum from prevention through to end of life care
- Act locally as well as impact on global issues such as human rights
- Ensure housing for seniors is affordable and accessible, including the affordability and accessibility of soft supports such as yard and home maintenance and homemaking services
- Change the way voting works- from proportional to accurate representation
- Demand continuation of Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action
- Finalize a conflict resolution policy for visitors/advocates in long term care
- Ensure there is protection of the environment
- Combat racism and discrimination

The Edmonton Grannies have developed a repertoire of songs that express support for oppressed people: First Nations, women, refugees, LBGQT persons. As one grannie so aptly put it, “your struggle is of concern to all society, we care and support you”.

The Raging Grannies not only walk the talk; fuelled by radical inspiration, they sing their songs with the aim of waking up those of us who are uncaring toward the issues threatening the very existence of people and this planet upon we live.

To connect with Edmonton Raging Grannies contact Marilyn Gaa at marilyngaa@telusplanet.net or Louise Swift at louiseswift@gmail.com

Information from Johnsons Inc.

Travel Advisories

As you prepare for your upcoming vacation abroad, the excitement builds. Your flight is booked and your bags are packed. There's just one last thing – check for travel advisories. While there is no way to predict an event such as tsunami, earthquake, or disease outbreak, it is important to be as informed as possible.

Before planning or leaving for any trip abroad, you are encouraged to contact the Canadian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade at www.voyage.gc.ca or 1-800-267-6788. There you'll find access to destination specific travel advisories, safety and security issues, local consular offices, and more.

How does a travel advisory affect your MEDOC travel insurance? If a travel advisory is issued or in place before your departure, any illness, injury or emergency medical condition may not be covered should you choose to continue with your travel plans. In terms of your Trip Cancellation benefits, rest assured that if a travel warning is issued after you've booked your trip advising Canadians not to travel to your planned destination then you're eligible for coverage should you cancel your trip and make a claim. If you do leave on your trip after an advisory is issued you will not be covered if your return trip is cancelled.

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So whether you are planning to travel today, tomorrow, or next month, remember to check for travel advisories. You can never be too prepared when it comes to safety.

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Hall H
7515 - 118 Ave., NW
Edmonton, Alberta

12:00pm - 8:00pm

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A Member Portrait

By Donna Durand

Born in China sixty-eight years ago, Lesley longed for two things—the freedom and democracy Canada offers its citizens and the desire to live out her life as a woman.

When she was in her forties, she moved to Canada with the sole desire to have a better quality of life. She moved to Toronto first, where she joined a sister. She moved again and settled in Edmonton. Soon she sponsored and was joined by her family: her partner and their three sons. Lesley worked in restaurants, as a custodian and trained and worked as a massage therapist. Now retired, Lesley reflected on her work as a massage therapist and noted some customers misunderstood what the boundaries of this work are. She experienced inappropriate touch as well as an incident with a client that left her feeling threatened after escaping an unexpected, dangerous situation.

These days Lesley enjoys ballet class, taking piano lessons, and going to the swimming pool. She enjoys her level of self-confidence where she is comfortable sporting a bikini. Lesley plays the piano, every day for at least an hour. Her favorite songs to play are You Raise Me Up and Amazing Grace. She has always enjoyed folk, country and popular music. Window shopping is a fun activity. Lesley loves imagining herself in clothes she sees as feminine. Where many of us would shy away from looking at our reflection in the windows and mirrors of clothing shops, Lesley takes a good long look. The most important thing in Lesley's life is to be identified as a woman.

Lesley decided it is never too late, and you are never too old to be who you are. She knew as a Canadian she would be supported to be who she is.

Born male, Lesley was in conflict all her life leading up to the operation four years ago that helped her transition from male to female.

“My body is the same as my mind. There is no longer a conflict between my mind and body. They are congruent. For years, I cross-dressed and had to hide my desire to be female. I now strive to be a whole person—a whole woman. I do not favour being called transgendered female. I am a woman.”



Fatoush (Salad with Pita)

Ingredients:

1 head lettuce
 3 tomatoes, chopped
 5-6 radishes, sliced
 1/2 cup parsley, chopped
 2 tbsp. mint, chopped
 1 medium cucumber, chopped
 1 small green bell pepper, chopped
 2 green onions, chopped
 2 pita breads

Dressing:

1/4 cup olive oil
 2 tbsp. lemon juice
 salt to taste
 freshly grated pepper to taste

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400°F

In a small bowl, mix oil, lemon juice, salt, and pepper, and set aside.

Mix the rest of the ingredients except the tomatoes and onions. Refrigerate.

Separate the pita bread into single layers and dry in the oven until golden brown. Break into pieces. Set aside.

Take the salad out of the refrigerator. Add tomatoes, green

onions, dressing, and pita bread pieces. Toss well and serve.

Recipe from Shahi Dusturkhan Gourmet Cooking from the Edmonton Multicultural Woman and Seniors Association



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Earth Mother

by Florence Richard

We've seen the space photography
The big blue marble rolling free
It's home sweet home to you and me
A paradise of land and sea
And we, her earthly progeny

We are her children.

We do not know what gave her birth
We only know her wondrous worth
And we all cling to Mother Earth
And rest upon her bosom's girth
We are Spirit and her mirth

We are her children.

She is the mother we all share

Man and woman, dark and fair
Her bounty is both rich and rare
She makes no favorites here or there
She gives us all her loving care

We are her children.

Away with cruelty and greed
Let us serve each other's need
Let us all be of one mind
The brimming chalice for to find
And in love's ever kindly spell
We'll nurture Mother Earth as well

For we are her children.



The Ghost of the Forest—Owl brings the totem gifts of ancient wisdom, intuition and keen observation

This Great Gray Owl is standing guard by her nest of two owlets. These owls are very tolerant of humans and are the largest in Canada.



Early blooming Chionodoxa

Oops!

Yes, it was me, its true I confess.

And the fact that I did, it made quite a mess!

It was one of those things that happens for sure.

But I really didn't do it to get even with her.

And it surely does get someone right there in the end.

But it was done without malice, which I can defend.

Now I'll try my hardest and watch that I do not repeat.

Tonight I'll put on the light and check the darn seat.

-D Murray Mackay

Alberta Council on Aging

49th Annual General Meeting



Tuesday June 14
9:00 A.M. to 3:30 P.M.

Lunch Provided

Kerby Centre for the 55+
Room 205, 1133 - 7 Ave SW, Calgary



Calgary & Area

Region 6



Aging Well in Your Community: Health, Home & Lifestyle Choices

Guest speakers:

Total Cardiology—Taking Control of Your Heart Health

Lifetime Highs Travel—Making the Most of Your Canadian Travel Dollar

Johnson Insurance—Your Insurance Options

Panel discussion at 1:00 pm:

“Should I Stay or Should I Go?”

RSVP

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Reflections on My Grandparents: Wendy

By Teresa Lawrence

My father's mother Wendy got married young, had five children, and lived a somewhat irresponsible life of parties, indulgence and adventure. She was a woman that made a real impression on everybody that she met. Her life wasn't easy- she never had a lot of money but it didn't matter. She was generous and always in a good mood. She was always singing or humming old show tunes, and wore a significant amount of gold jewellery that she never took off. She wore long gowns and feather boas all the time and was constantly trying to feed everybody. Where Wendy came from, I really do not know: that entire side of my family is a mystery to me and the rest of my relatives. When I asked, she said she might be part Irish and part "gypsy queen", but if I asked a few months later it was Cherokee and French. Even as she and her husband aged, they always seemed so young and fun to me as a child, although I imagine that this frustrated their own children. She had more than her fair share of hardships, but lived life with such a positive and carefree attitude. She was a genuinely happy person who did not care what others thought of her. After her husband passed, she made a habit out of going out to dinner, sitting down with a stranger and declaring herself their new friend. "Nobody really wants to eat alone, even if they insist otherwise" she explained to me. She was only in her early sixties when she passed away from a combination of diseases that were definitely related to a long life of drinking, smoking, and eating everything delicious, but in her words, she had no regrets, aside from not being able to watch her eight grandchildren grow up.

Did I Ever Tell You How Lucky You Are?

One late-fall weekend my brother and I were being dropped off at my grandmother's house to be looked after while my parents went away. She lived in a high-rise condo in downtown Edmonton. We were always excited to go there because her building had a swimming pool in the basement and she let us stay up late watching America's Most Wanted and eating junk that we weren't allowed to have at home. I will never forget the smell of her condo: tobacco, bacon, and laundry soap. Oh this particular day, she immediately walked us over to her always-open-even-in-January patio door and said "did I ever tell you how lucky you are?" pointing down to the



Teresa has her Masters' degree in Human Ecology. This story is part of a collection written about her grandparents as part of a project with GeriActors and Friends.

trees below where someone had made a shelter out of a tarp. “Someone lives there” she said, and then fixed us a snack.

Glamour Shots

After a tough round of chemotherapy, my Dad and one of his sisters took Wendy to Las Vegas, her favorite place in the world. She would sit up all night playing the slot machines. “Lobster Fishing” and “Kitty Glitter” were her lucky machines, and I’ll never forget it. My dad and his sister would take shifts so that one could get some sleep while the other kept grandma company in the casino, making sure that she had cigarettes and didn’t get hassled or drink too much. When they were walking through the hotel on the way to dinner one evening, Wendy saw a shop advertising glamour shots and said “thank God I’m already wearing my good blouse”. She sat down in front of the green and pink fabric backdrop and posed for the photographer. She chose one picture as her favorite which now, ten years later, sits in the home of everyone who loved her. She has no hair and had taken off her wig. She is wearing a silk animal print blouse. She has long painted nails and gold rings on three of her fingers. One of her hands is propping up her head, which she claimed to like because the pose “covered her double chin”. She is smiling and she is beautiful. She told my Dad that this was the picture she wanted at her funeral because it was “properly glamorous” and “how she should be remembered”, but more importantly, that she wanted a hundred framed copies of it to be set out on the funeral reception tables and every guest be required to take one home.



LEARN THE SIGNS

BREAK THE SILENCE

If you or someone you know is impacted by elder abuse, there is help available.

For more information and resources:

» Family Violence Information Line
310-1818

» www.seniors.alberta.ca

LEARN THE SIGNS

BREAK THE SILENCE

**World Elder Abuse
Awareness Day**

» June 15

Alberta

Meet Your Board Members



Meet Paul Howe, Regional Director of Medicine Hat and Area

Paul's background includes an army career of 27 years as an officer in the Military Engineers with his retirement rank in 1995 as a Lieutenant Colonel. He left the army and spent ten years in the investment field as a financial planner. He is active in high school rugby as a coach, and still referees senior men's and women's rugby in Alberta. His wife Judy is an RN, who has much experience dealing with senior health issues, which they regularly discuss in their daily walks. They have four adult children, all girls, three living in Calgary and one in the UK in Leeds.



Meet Frank Hoebarth, Regional Director of Calgary and Area

Born and raised in Saskatoon, Frank left the west to study in Ottawa where he earned Bachelor of Arts and Philosophy degrees before returning to Vancouver, graduating with a Masters of Social Work. Frank was married to Germaine, who passed away in 2014. While they had no children, they "borrowed" them, especially from their extended family. Besides watching these children grow they also watched their champion Beagles mature. Frank has been an advocate for seniors, representing Calgary and area, on the board of the Alberta Council on Aging for many years.

Regional Reports

Region 1 (Northwest)

Our Annual General Meeting is coming up and will take place April 12, at 1:30 pm. More details are available online at www.acaging.ca

Respectfully submitted,
Marlene Reddekopp

Region 2 (Northeast)

We have had two meetings since our last update: one in Athabasca on Nov 27 with guest speakers MLA Colin Piquette and MLA Dave Hanson. Key issues were rural ambulance services, transportation, and housing. A request was made for an update: re priority list for sprinkler installations in all Lodges and supportive living facilities. We noted a need to educate the new MLA's on services and concerns of rural seniors.

The second was in Elk Point on February 19 with 60 people representing ten communities, our

guest speakers were MLA Dave Hanson and Lawyer Christina Tchir. Tchir presented on Power of Attorney, Personal Directives, and Estate Planning. Hanson reported that ACA's position paper on health and housing was given to Wildrose's shadow ministers. Lac La Biche's tub was installed after three years and all showers upgraded, making them safe and modernized. AHS agreed to move the dialysis unit to a permanent location in the hospital. "Right To Choose" is a saving option for our government to support seniors in their home environment.

Our region suggested that funding for FCSS have 10% directed toward supports and services for seniors. We continue to advocate for local autonomy for facilities of 100 beds or less in rural Alberta.

Respectfully submitted,
Diana Anderson

Region 4 (Edmonton Area)

Our next Casino will be July 13 and 14 at the Yellowhead Casino in Edmonton. We are looking for a few additional volunteers who can work either the afternoon or evening shift positions. Over the past decade, the casino has provided the Alberta Council on Aging an average of about \$40,000 per year. This amount is significant and has helped us fund a number of very useful ongoing programs. If you would be prepared to volunteer, please get in touch with the office 780.423.7781 or contact me directly at gary@acaging.ca or phone 780.939.4842.

I continue to represent our group on the Seniors Task Force coordinated through Public Interest Alberta. There were two meeting in this quarter and a meeting with the new seniors minister in the Alberta Government. The task force remains concerned that action on many of the election promises has been very slow.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary Pool

Region 5 (Central Alberta)

We had a general meeting on December 1 at the Golden Circle, with 60 attendees. Eileen Wagner RN, an educator for Central Alberta Cancer Centre, Red Deer spoke. Our focus was on support services available to patients at the Red Deer cancer clinic.

Our next meeting was February 2 at the Golden Circle and had 75 in attendance. Our speakers were Pam Greenwood from Service Canada and Deirdre Maclean from Alberta Supports. Our focus this time was on programs and benefits available to Alberta seniors.

Board meetings were held January 5 and March 1. Mike O'Hanlon resigned from region board; thank you, Mike, for your counsel these past years. The outreach initiative for Region 5 was presented for review, and we had representative from office of Barb Miller, MLA for Red Deer South in attendance.

Respectfully submitted,
Ron Rose

Region 6 (Calgary Area)

Region 6 continues its efforts at revitalization. Three volunteers joined a group to begin planning the next steps in the revitalization process. This group of five (three volunteers and the two regional directors) became the Steering Committee for the Annual General Meeting of ACA. Over several meetings, the Steering Committee has made arrangements for such things as rental space, advertising mock-ups, speakers, budgeting, and all the minutia that goes into planning for such an important event. Not to be missed, of course, is selecting the menu for the all important lunch, drinks and snacks. Who says there is no such thing as a free lunch? Throughout the process, there was frequent contact with ACA's President and Executive Director.

A special thank you to the Steering Committee and its very committed volunteers for their many contributions.

Respectfully submitted,
Frank Hoebarth

Region 8 (Southeast)

I attended the AGM of the Medicine Hat Senior Citizens Advisory Committee, the primary group dealing with senior issues in the city. The Mayor and five Councillors were in attendance.

The City has agreed to renovate Veiner Centre, the old senior centre, which had been severely damaged in the flood of 2013. They are still waiting for final authorization but it would appear that renovations will begin this year. This is fortunate as the previous loss of the Centre had impacted the many groups who had used the Veiner Centre as the central for seniors activity in the city.

There does not appear to be any major concerns in other parts of Region 8.

Respectfully Submitted,
Paul Howe

Region 9 (East Central)

I attended the Recognizing Fraud presentation in Kitscoty at the local Seniors centre. The presentation was well received and enlightening to the audience.

The president of Region 9 (Nick Chrapko) and myself attended and participated in the Aging in Place in East Central Alberta. A Regional Check-in on Assisted Living, Housing and Health Care for Seniors information exchange and workshop. The seminar/workshop was very informative. There was a significant amount of information shared by networking between attendees and guest speakers. Some members are concerned about what might be happening with Seniors services and benefits with the new Governments.

I have been working with the community and schools on Linking the Generations and with the Vegreville Age Friendly Advisory Committee. Being a member of the Impact Vegreville committee and taking part in planning and participating with the University of Alberta in a forum with participants from the community. The forum had participants from all demographics in Vegreville and area.

Respectfully submitted,
Dwayne Hlady



Diana Anderson presenting on Recognizing Fraud in the County of Vermilion River.

Member Concerns

Right now there is no reduced fare for seniors on Calgary Transit for single trips, normally offered in most cities of the world. The only reduced fare provided to older people in Calgary is an annual pass for \$95.00. Many seniors only use transit for a few times only in a year and for them an annual pass is expensive. I would like to request your board to bring this up with the appropriate authorities in Calgary to provide seniors a reduced fare. Thank you.

-Anonymous

You don't seem to be addressing sexuality in all of its expressions as it relates to older people.

-Lesley

Disability Coverage: Coverage can begin from the first day of an accident/hospitalization up to 65. So why encourage older people to work longer if coverage only goes to 65?

-Yvonne

Toronto is more Senior Friendly than Edmonton-- anything with four floors high has an elevator. In Edmonton, I have found that the vertical clearance of the steps can change on the same flight of stairs. Outside, there are frequently no railings on the stairs. In rehab after knee surgery, there were stairs in and out that made it difficult to walk. I expressed concern and was told, "The nurse walks you out, so it's okay." I have also found that handicap parking stalls are not wide enough to open doors entirely, especially at Doctor's offices.

-Murshida

Thank you for your submissions. We welcome all comments and concerns.

- Editor

What has Alberta Council on Aging been doing?

Meetings and Interactions with Government

- Submission to Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development regarding Alberta Council on Aging's ideas about federal policies and programs (improving income security and creating more affordable housing for seniors) (Donna Durand)
- Presented Let's Talk Dementia program to Alberta Health for consideration for endorsement following contribution as committee member with Alberta Dementia Strategy (Donna Durand)
- Engagement session regarding programs Alberta Seniors believe will support seniors to remain in their homes. At this time also met new seniors and housing minister, Honourable Lori Sigurdson (Frank Hoebarth, Calgary, Donna Durand, Edmonton) Completed survey by Alberta Health to understand views on the current and future role and function of Alberta's Expert Committee on Drug Evaluation and Therapeutics Committee (Ron Rose)
- Took part in telephone and online survey of federal, provincial and territorial departments responsible for seniors on content and design of publications
- Sent information package, by request to MP Mark Warawa opposition and critic for seniors

Partnerships

- Teleconference with Credit Council of Alberta to determine potential for partnership (Laureen Guldbrandsen and Donna Durand)
- Welcomed by the Alberta Disabilities Forum as organizational member
- Attended Aging in Place, Camrose Seniors Coalition launch of navigation tool- Supports for the Journey (Fred Olsen, Dwayne Hlday, Nick Krapko, Donna Durand)
- Provided feedback to ALCOA (Active Living Coalition for Older Adults) on recent publication Is Your Home Healthy?
- Representation on Seniors Taskforce (Gary Pool)

Other Activities

- Applied for STEP (summer temporary employment program reinstated under new government)
- Format and refresh all programs to be utilized under Community Outreach Program
- Begin process of digitalizing all documents
- Board of Directors meeting via teleconference
- Phone meeting with community members regarding Senior Friendly™ train the trainer program
- Conducted interviews for upcoming newsletter
- Teleconference with Region 6 – planning meeting for AGM
- Prepared application and volunteer recruitment for Yellowhead Casino, Edmonton
- Letter to the editor, Edmonton Journal regarding Tax Deferral Program

Speaking Out for Change: A Personal Story about Life in Long Term Care in Alberta

by Linda McFarlane, MSW retired, RSW

The nurse at the long term care facility welcomed me. She led me along a smelly corridor past people waiting in wheelchairs to a tiny room which I was to share. Music blasted from a radio and a television blared nearby. I was depressed and had akathisia, a side effect of medication which my physician had prescribed for treatment-resistant depression. I had lost my hope, relationship, home, and my role in my family and as a student. I felt alone, abandoned and that I had been tossed into a warehouse to wait until death. I was only 57.

My story highlights the need for changes in both the mental health care system and the continuing care system. For change to happen we require strong leadership and vision from Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services as well as advocacy and input from the public, advocates, families, communities, patients and clients.

We need more support in the community for people with care needs, including more funding for home care and more day programs. We need more care places for seniors and others who require ongoing care. Homelike facilities where people get the care they need without having to move from one to another are key. As well, CARE must include a focus on meeting people's individual needs and on both quality of care and quality of life.

Since October I have had the opportunity to work on the AHS Continuing Care Quality Committee and another committee charged with preparing a directive regarding visitation in continuing care. I am encouraged by the work these committees are doing and the emphasis they are bringing on the importance of openness and monitoring quality.

Out of Options

My long term care journey began in May 2005 in Calgary. Akathisia caused me to endlessly pace so that I felt trapped in a body that refused to rest. Hospital physicians decided they could do no more; my family could not help, and no group homes were available. Long term care seemed the only option.

My roommate coughed all night. When a private room became available, I was lucky to have extra money for it. The room was 10 by 11 feet. It still smelled like death.

The food was pre-cooked and then warmed, and fresh fruit rarely offered. The only outside sitting space was a deck overlooking the parking lot, designated as a smoking area.

I learned that my facility was privately owned, for profit and received funding from the government to provide care. Residents ranged from 30 to 90 years old. Some were old and frail, others suffered from a mental illness or dementia and two had developmental disabilities. One woman had severe cerebral palsy. Many had dual diagnoses.

There was caring staff, but the facility, programs, and care were not appropriate for me. At times, I felt treated as less than human. I dreaded waking up to face each new meaningless day.

I paced the halls and acted out my anger. I do not remember anyone expressing understanding or

saying something like, “This must be tough for you.” I was not invited to my first case conference until my family insisted. At the conference, staff discussed my behaviour and their goals for me. The main goal was that I participate in bingo and socialize.

Months later I could sit for short periods. Desperate for companionship, I begged the staff to play cards with me. Some did. These caring people, along with family and friends who visited, made life more tolerable, but it was never enough.

Activities were bingo, chair exercises, crafts suitable for children, occasional outings, and sing-a-longs with songs from the 1940’s. The physician and others often barged into my room without knocking. Staff had little time to spend with residents beyond doing basic care. A social worker occasionally arrived to help with financial issues.

Getting My Life Back

I began to visit and stay with my family for many days at a time. When needed, I babysat and helped out. Family urged me to leave the facility, but I dreaded living alone. When I asked the nurse about supportive housing, she said I was not ready.

After feeling useful, life at the care centre was unbearable. I volunteered to set tables and help take people in wheelchairs for walks. I ventured on a hike with a paid companion and was so delighted to be back in the mountains that I started exercising to get in shape for more hikes.

When my daughter-in-law was placed on bed rest because of a high-risk pregnancy, my family lent me their car so that I could assist. Care workers were shocked when they saw me driving! A physician friend introduced me to a psychiatrist. When I met with her, she said I did not belong in long term care and that I needed to move out and get my life back.

My family and I repeatedly requested a case conference, and one was finally organized. I learned the date and time from my family. The transition care nurse treated me like a human being, spoke to me directly and discussed options. She said I did not qualify for long term care, but there were no transition homes. The facility director gave me two months to leave. Using a computer borrowed from a care aid, I found a place of my own and on a freezing night in February 2008, moved out with the help of a volunteer.

One year later I climbed Kilimanjaro, then returned to University and completed my Masters in Social Work. I became politically active and helped initiate Calgary Social Workers for Social Justice. Currently, I am working with the Gerontology Social Workers Action Group on a research/action project on continuing care.

A Good Life for Those in Care

If I had not had money, friends, and a family that needed me, I might have suffered forever in a long term care facility with care that did not meet my needs. Overall, the personal cost and the cost to the health care system were enormous. Many other Albertans in our care system suffer as well. Despite caring staff and some good initiatives, advocacy groups, people in care and family members still report inconsistent and at times inadequate care and poor quality of life in long term care. Alberta’s Auditor General’s 2014 report found that “Alberta Health Services has insufficient assurance that long term

care facilities are appropriately and consistently allocating publicly funded staff hours to each shift, to deliver daily care that fulfills individual residents' care plans."

With leadership and a guiding vision for quality of both care and life, we can make a 'good life' a reality for those in care. We must listen to patients, their families, and our frontline workers. There are excellent models and research from which to learn. No one should live in an institutional type facility or a shared room no matter their care needs.

All facilities can be homelike and organized in smaller family size groupings. Everyone should have a choice and help to be as independent as possible.

Increased funding for home care and day programs will allow us to bring care to people in their homes as long as possible instead of making them move to get care. Better training and pay for staff, higher staffing levels, and an ombudsperson program will make a difference. More accountability and transparency are essential. We must phase out government contracts and subsidies to for-profit providers and stop making care for vulnerable people a business opportunity.

With our new government, change is possible in Alberta, but we need the political will to put this on the provincial agenda. Whether you work in the care system or are concerned about family or friends, please speak out about your concerns and encourage others to do so.

This article is reprinted with permission from the Alberta College of Social Worker's magazine "The Advocate" Winter 2015.

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