

- 54 -

The Pas

Golden Agers Band Together for Sociability, Health and Activism

There is only one senior's group in The Pas, but the Golden Agers make sure there are lots of activities for any senior in the town who wants to join. The Golden Agers' mission is to relieve isolation and loneliness of the elderly and improve their mobility and fitness.

They operate a senior citizen's centre that provides recreation, education, and cultural events for members. The non-profit group rents a building from The Pas Kinsman club which is equipped with card tables, a meeting room, computers, and a library area with videos and DVDs that members can borrow.

One of the things that keeps members coming back is the CDPI Healthy Snack program. Seniors who live alone tend not to eat as well as they should, and Golden Agers President Sharon Arnold says the nutritious food is very important for their health. The CDPI-funded snack is "like the carrot in front of the rabbit," Arnold said. "It entices them to come. If there are things

left over, I like to include everyone, and send things home."

The Golden Agers also advocate on behalf of seniors in their community and across the province on issues like housing and public facility accessibility. Sharon sits on the provincial Age-Friendly Council, which is currently working with the government to get a 40-unit seniors' complex built in The Pas. Manitoba Housing is willing to finance one-bedroom units, but the council is pushing for two-bedroom units because many senior couples with illness and mobility problems are much more comfortable with separate bedrooms.

Mobility around town is another issue being addressed. "Our mall doesn't have electronic doors, and one of our seniors' housing units doesn't even have electronic doors," Arnold explained. "Heaps of snow in winter limit accessibility - we lobby, and the snow gets cleared."

CDPI is one of many sources that the Golden Agers count on for funding. The group looks for grants from private foundations, local businesses, Town Council, and organizations like Community Places and New Horizons for Seniors. The Golden Agers have also teamed up with the Legion and Rotary Club, and the Kelsey bus line donates two buses for special outings. "When you're little like us you have to look for freebies," says Arnold.

Daily scheduled activities for the Golden Agers include exercise programs on Monday and Friday mornings with whist and crib in the afternoon, shuffleboard

on Tuesdays at Valhalla Court (a seniors' housing complex), and carpet bowling on Thursday afternoons. An 11-passenger van gets the group out of isolation and allows seniors to ride in style, and van drivers are willing to help with walkers or wheelchairs. "We take them up to Flin Flon for shopping, to the Seniors Games, grocery shopping, to the local airport if they're flying out for medical trips, or to the library - we ask for donations to pay Autopac and gas," Sharon said. "Our seniors appreciate it, and they're all as generous as they can be."

Contact Information:

Sharon Arnold

204-623-1264

saarnold_6@hotmail.com

Take Note

Seniors and Their Communities:

- A higher percentage of seniors reported a **strong sense of belonging** to the community in 2005 compared to 2001 (72% vs. 65%). Seniors feel more connected to their community than do other Canadians.
- Seniors are **politically engaged**. One in five seniors attended a public meeting in the past year. Compared to younger Canadians, seniors are more likely to follow news and current affairs, and almost 90% of seniors voted in the 2000 federal election.
- Most seniors enjoy a **good social network** as measured by the number of close relatives and close friends with whom they are at ease and can rely upon for help, and by the number of other friends they make.

<http://74.125.95.104/search?q=cache:Yp56a2PjD3MJ:dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/HP30-1-2006E.pdf+canadian+seniors+isolation+fact+sheet&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=22&gl=ca>

- 55 -

The Pas

Strengthening Families and People with Schizophrenia

People with schizophrenia and their families in The Pas are receiving crucial support from the Manitoba Schizophrenia Society (MSS), a non-profit organization which runs peer support groups open to anybody with a major mental illness. The Society receives funding from CDPI to run meal and exercise programs, smoking cessation workshops, and to promote healthy eating habits.

The MSS also focuses on informing the public about the challenges facing people with schizophrenia. “We have quite a few programs to educate the public,” said MSS outreach worker Nancy Shewchuk. “These include a ‘Hearing Voices’ workshop, which is a three-hour workshop simulation to help people understand schizophrenia.”

Family support is also a key component in the recovery process, and the Society runs a 12-week “Strengthening Families Together” workshop that teaches families

how to understand and support a family member who has been diagnosed with a mental illness. A “Hidden Victims, Hidden Healer” program also offers education on how to be a caregiver to someone with a mental illness without neglecting the caregiver’s own needs. This program is based on eight steps for caregivers – awareness, validation, acceptance, challenge, forgiving, releasing guilt, self-esteem, and growth.

People with chronic mental illness die as much as 25 years earlier than others. In addition to a lack of motivation caused by the illness itself and medication side effects, schizophrenia patients going to the hospital for another illness may be overlooked and receive inadequate treatment because they are labelled schizophrenic. Low finances mean some are unable to afford healthy food or physical activity programs, and reports indicate that 80 per cent of people with schizophrenia tend to smoke.¹ “Nicotine seems to target something they think they need,” said Shewchuk. “It’s important to give them resources.”

A big benefit of the peer group is getting people together to discuss the challenges they face and encourage each other to look for resources, take their medication as prescribed, and find meaningful things to do – it is a holistic program that focuses on the body, mind and soul. The weekly meal program became a popular time to gather, offering healthy dishes like soup, salmon on whole wheat buns, and vegetables.

¹ Michael T. Compton, MD, MPH: John Newcomer, MD – Medscape Psychiatry & Mental Health. 2007

“They liked getting the food – the success was that people came more regularly because we had money for good food. You have to give them what they want to get them to come,” said Nancy. “Sometimes we lose them, and sometimes we have to hunt them down. I need to get to them!”

Contact Information:

Nancy Shewchuk
204-623-9698
nshewchu@normanrha.mb.ca

Take Note

Stigma and Inadequate Mental Health Care

- The stigma attached to mental illnesses presents a serious barrier not only to diagnosis and treatment but also to acceptance in the community.
- Families report being stretched to the limit and unable to cope.
- Only one in five children in need of mental health services receives care.
- Large numbers of people with mental illness are living on the streets.
- Eight-six percent of hospitalizations for mental illness in Canada occur in general hospitals.
- In 1999, 3.8% of all admissions in general hospitals (1.5 million hospital days) were due to anxiety disorders, bipolar disorders, schizophrenia, major depression, personality disorders, eating disorders and suicidal behaviour.

http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/miic-mmac/chap_1-eng.php

- 56 -

The Pas

Pedometers Inspire Walkers

Three and a half million steps in just a month and a half! The Joe A. Ross School on Opaskwayak Cree Nation put pedometers purchased with CDPI funding to good use by keeping track of their steps during school hours. One teacher noted that children were motivated to finish assignments quickly so they could go for a walk around the school between classes. At the end of six weeks, they counted 3,468,463 steps with 72 pedometers. That is approximately 2,600 km or the equivalent of walking nearly to the west coast and back!

“The pedometer program improved morale and increased physical activity. Everyone was very enthusiastic and appreciated the help and effort.”

Health Canada information estimates that one in four children between the ages of two and 17 are overweight or obese, with childhood obesity in Manitoba tripling in the last 25 years. To maintain or improve your health, Canada’s Physical Activity Guide recommends 30 to 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily.

The CDPI committee in The Pas and Opaskwayak Cree Nation teamed up with the *in motion* Committee, as well as students from the University College of the North nursing students to motivate children to do more physical activity. Dr. Martin Collis, a renowned personal and professional wellness speaker, was invited to give the audience an extra boost of inspiration in October, 2007.

Packages including 72 pedometers, physical activity guides and nutrition guides were distributed to Joe A. Ross School as well as the Kelsey and Opasquia Elementary Schools in January, 2008. Remaining pedometers were sold to staff members at Joe A. Ross School for \$10 each and the money raised was used for healthy snacks in the school. “The pedometer program improved morale and increased physical activity,” said CDPI committee member and Primary Health Care Nurse Lori Veito. The initial goal of the committee to increase the physical activity of school children was definitely met, she said.

Veito said CDPI has also supported a seniors walking program, called “Walking Buddies” that has also been implemented where seniors can stretch and walk in the local hall. At Christmas time she took eight senior walkers out for lunch to recognize and reward them for a good and continued effort, a gesture they “loved” and will help to inspire continued efforts.

Contact Information:

Lori Veito

204-623-9686

lveito@normanrha.mb.ca

▼
▼ *Take Note*

▼
▼ **How Many Steps Each Day Will Provide Positive Health Benefits?**

- ▼ • Children (age 8-10): 12,000-16,000 steps/day on average.
- ▼ • Youth (age 10-20): 11,000-12,000 steps/day on average.
- ▼ • Healthy Adults age 20-50: 7,000-11,000 steps/day on average.
- ▼ • Healthy Adults age 50-70: 6,000-8,500 steps/day on average.
- ▼ • Adults with disabilities and chronic disease: 3,500-5,500 steps/day on average.

▼ (There are approximately 1,320 steps in a kilometre with an average stride of 76 cm)

▼ <http://www.walkaboutns.ca/countingsteps.aspx>

- 57 -

The Pas

Student Nurses Provide Manpower Boost for CDPI Programs

The CDPI committee in The Pas is happy to see Cindy Nordick at their meetings. She is the course leader for a community health-related clinical class taken by nursing students in The Pas that provides a major manpower boost to local CDPI programs.

These willing student volunteers are able to advance CDPI objectives while learning and receiving course credit at the same time.

The second-year students study in The Pas as part of a joint baccalaureate nursing program with the University College of the North and the University of Manitoba. These future nurses get involved with the planning of CDPI events, contacting speakers, finding venues, networking, advertising, and budgeting. “We all know that in health care, budgets are often very limited, so you need to be creative in

“When they graduate, and are working, they will already have some experience as to what’s involved in the planning and implementing of events, conferences, and workshops.”

what you can provide,” Nordick said. “The whole idea is that when they graduate, and are working, they will already have some experience as to what’s involved in the planning and implementing of events, conferences, and workshops.”

Students learn the importance of promoting preventative health programs for the public that focus on decreasing health care needs. Making people more aware of the health benefits of diet, exercise, and quitting smoking is now a fundamental health care strategy, and The Pas’ nursing program has embraced a hands-on focus on prevention. “Years ago you didn’t hear anything about community health in the nursing program,” said Nordick, “but in our program now there is a whole term of community health.”

In addition to learning the nuts and bolts of event planning, the volunteers have been able to showcase their creative energy. On one project, the students lobbied the mayor and council of The Pas with a PowerPoint pitch for a Community Garden project and plans for follow-up public forums. And during a “Get Caught *in motion*” campaign in collaboration with CDPI and Manitoba *in motion*, students got the word out by writing a series of “active living” newspaper articles, creating a 60-second public announcement on the importance of being active, and even running a phone-in question and answer show on the radio. Students also went around the town catching people who were physically active and giving them in motion prizes as well as a ballot to enter for a grand prize.

A different group also showed their persistence and creativity while working with the Manitoba Métis Federation on a children's health fair called "Spring Into Health." The school children got involved with a poster contest to promote the fair all around town. Contest winners were highlighted in the local newspaper getting healthy lifestyle and nutritious food prizes, and many got their parents to come to the evening event, which was attended by 300 people. Games included a timed obstacle course, food bingo based on the Canada Food Guide, and a taste-testing Wheel of Fortune that featured different foods the kids wouldn't normally try. Speakers representing a variety of health-related programs were on hand to talk about issues like anti-smoking and diabetes awareness, and interactivity was encouraged by issuing passports. After

visiting and participating at a booth, the person got a stamp, and getting stamps from six different booths qualified them for a passport prize-draw at the end.

The nursing student volunteers work hard and are enthusiastic about the course. "It has provided them with concrete learning experiences and a realistic picture of the complexities of public health education events," said Nordick. While the students get practical quality education, the CDPI in The Pas gets a cadre of dedicated workers for its program events – a win-win situation for all!

Contact Information:

Cindy Nordick
204-627-8680
cnordick@ucn.ca

Take Note

Community health nurses practice in diverse settings and roles, including:

- Home health
- Public health
- Street health
- Primary care
- Community health centres

<http://www.communityhealthnursescanada.org>