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RESEARCH MATTERS

RIA FEATURE

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF BELONGING

By Alie Teetzel-Edmondstone

The RIA is making plans to bring the community together to support older adults living with dementia and their care partners through an exciting new project – Supporting Inclusion through Intergenerational Partnerships (SIIP).

Over the next five years SIIP will bring generations together to address loneliness and social isolation in older adults living with dementia and their care partners in the community across Waterloo Region. It will provide opportunities for older adults and secondary and post-secondary aged youth to interact in meaningful ways — sharing skills, expertise and experiences.

“This project gives us the opportunity to not only bring our resources for people living with dementia to the community, but to also help foster partnerships and innovation across



The Honourable Deb Schulte, Minister of Seniors (left) speaks to SIIP Community Advisory Board member Kathleen Vanderlinden (right) and Josie d'Avernas, Executive Director of the RIA (centre) at the project launch.

generations. I look forward to seeing how Waterloo Region becomes better able to support our older adults through this work,” said Josie d’Avernas, Executive Director of the RIA.

According to the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, the number of people diagnosed with dementia in the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network is expected to increase to more than 13,500 in 2020.

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In addition to memory loss and difficulty problem solving, those living with dementia may experience changes in mood and the ability to communicate. This can make it difficult to establish or maintain personal relationships, potentially causing lost connections with friends, family members and the wider community.

Socially isolated older adults are also less able to participate in and contribute to their communities, resulting in a significant loss to organizations, communities and society at large.

The RIA will bring together individuals and groups to identify needs and opportunities within the community and work together to create solutions. A community advisory group has been formed to assist in project planning with participants from a variety

of sectors including dementia advocacy groups, school boards, youth, community groups, service providers researchers and people with lived experience.

The Honourable Deb Schulte, Minister of Seniors, announced funding of \$3 million for the project at an event held at the RIA on February 14, 2020 to launch the project.

A public Think Tank event is being planned for March 27, 2020. This will be an opportunity for community members, students, educators, organizations, researchers and local government to come together to learn more about SIIP and contribute to building a community plan.

For more information about SIIP, visit intergenerationalpartnerships.ca ■

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The Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging aims to enhance the quality of life and care of older adults through partnerships in research, education and practice. Innovations are developed and tested in the Schlegel Villages, and then shared to benefit older adults everywhere.



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