

In this issue

1. Focus on a caring community
2. Of Interest
3. In case you missed it
4. Celebrating collaborative leadership
5. Holiday wishes

Waterloo Wellington



Older Adult Strategy

Bi-Monthly Newsletter – December 2019

Issue

TWO

Social Inclusion for All

WWOAS Goals

Goal 1: Age-Friendly Society and Communities.

Waterloo-Wellington citizens age well within communities that celebrate their life in society and contributions to their communities, thriving through dignity, purpose, belonging and inclusion.

Goal 2: Healthy Aging. All people living in Waterloo-Wellington are exposed to the conditions and experiences that support optimal health throughout the lifecycle/lifespan.

Goal 3: Health System Capacity. The Waterloo-Wellington health system is designed and coordinated in a way that realizes deep functional integration and the appropriate use of health resources to achieve optimal system capacity in support of an aging population.

Goal 4: Collaboration and Coordination. The Waterloo-Wellington health system fully leverages and capitalizes on intra and intersectoral collaboration, offering a whole-of-community orientation to health, well-being and quality of life.

Goal 5: Quality. Older adults living in Waterloo-Wellington have universal access to the highest quality of care, services and supports — those that emphasize excellence in safety, effectiveness, person-centredness, timeliness, efficiency and equity.

Goal 6: Empowerment. The Waterloo-Wellington health system plays a pivotal and functional role in enabling the empowerment of people as they age, their caregivers and the health and social service providers they rely upon.

WWOAS reports can be accessed [here](#).

Caring *for* our community begins with caring *about* everyone within it

As we continue on our collective journey toward a transformed health system there is growing momentum and an explicit commitment emerging to better support healthy aging and ensure an optimal quality of life for all people in our region.

Our wish, not only for this holiday season but for every day, is for a transformed health system that champions intersectoral, interorganizational and interprofessional collaborations and public engagement efforts to develop whole-of-community solutions that bring societal gains to some of the most pressing issues facing older adults, especially those exposed to conditions that predispose vulnerability.

An age-friendly society values the contributions older adults have made, and continue to make, to strong, diverse and inclusive communities. It honours personal legacy, respects autonomy, self-determination and independence, and celebrates life purpose across the lifespan, allowing citizens to experience a sense of belonging to the broader community. And indeed, age-friendly societies ensure that older adults are exposed to an environment and conditions that enable them to enjoy the best quality of life and a breath of opportunities to prosper and thrive.

Inclusive communities respect diversity and differences and are places where neighbours look out for one another. They respect the uniqueness of lived experiences, offering opportunities for social connection, intergenerational engagement and lifelong learning. They offer secure places and safe spaces for people to live, work, learn, play, worship and do business irrespective of age and level of function. Individuals enjoy fulsome lives in their community of choice.

Age-friendly communities are those that have programs and resources in place for seniors to lead healthy, active, independent and engaged lives and continue to learn, contribute and be safe. It is important to create social and environmental conditions that support secure housing, safe mobility, access to appropriate and reliable transportation, and opportunities for civic engagement and participation, such as more affordable seniors housing and improved transportation options.

Driving purposeful change at the health system level will mean bringing together health and social services in a more coordinated and responsive way to better address the very real needs that older adults and their families are facing, not only today but into the future.

Some recommendations worth advancing

- **Address social isolation, especially in rural areas.** Sustaining existing successful programs and fostering innovation to better support seniors at risk of social isolation are important, given its pronounced negative impact health, quality of life and longevity. One idea to increase the engagement of older adults in meaningful ways is to encourage their participation in society such as can be offered through the voluntary sector. Implementing a regional volunteer program to connect older adults and harness generativity could be a good place to start. Social determinants of health challenges are pronounced in rural areas, especially income, housing, transportation and access to care, services and supports. For this reason, securing reliable and affordable access to transportation services for all older adults living in Waterloo-Wellington is important, irrespective of where they live.
- **Connect with, and communicate through, community-based social networks.** Supporting opportunities for sharing and interaction when communities gather during times of celebration and healing is important to recognize in an area as diverse as Waterloo-Wellington. Often, these can be the best opportunities to leverage knowledge exchange and information sharing through well-connected informal networks.

- **Encourage the full participation and contributions of older adults through both paid and unpaid work.**

We know that there is a direct correlation between social connectedness and well-being — that is, having family and friends and a feeling of belonging to a community contribute to good health.¹ Older adults who are not able to access, or do not participate in, social support networks may lack a sense of belonging and become isolated or lonely. Seniors benefit from and contribute significantly to life through both paid and unpaid work. In fact, ongoing involvement in volunteer activities has been shown to moderate the negative psychological impacts associated with developing functional limitations.

Communities should help people to remain healthy, active, safe and socially connected at all stages of their lives. Older adults should be supported to age well and with independence, able to take advantage of the opportunities that arise in their later years, and to be supported through their challenges.

- **Ensure that policy, programming and service decisions include attention to the unique needs of aging members of all populations.** These include, for instance, low-income residents, Indigenous persons, people who do not communicate in English, new immigrants and refugees and members of the LGBTQ2 (Rainbow) community.
- **Increase the number and scope of intergenerational partnership programs in LTC and other care settings**
- **Expand opportunities and partners to promote intergenerational housing as a viable solution to support seniors remaining healthy and in their own homes.** One model could involve college/university students and seniors living together – very plausible in a region with three universities and a community college.
- **Work with cities and Ontario Health Teams to support the development and expansion of:**
 - age-friendly neighbourhoods, including those around apartment buildings or housing developments that house a high concentration of seniors.
 - community health hubs, including those that reach informal retirement communities, including apartment buildings or housing developments that house a high concentration of seniors.

Of Interest

13th annual Poverty Symposium: The Perils of Poverty and Social Isolation Across the Lifespan

Hosted by: The Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries (SPCCND)

Date: Thursday, February 27, 2020

Time: 1:00 pm - 4:30 pm

This symposium will consist of keynote speakers and group panel discussions. The theme of the event will be how poverty and social isolation impact individuals across different ages.

The first presentation will be with Bobbye Goldenberg, Executive Director of the Family Counselling Centre of Cambridge and North Dumfries and Cameron Dearlove, Executive Director of the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank. The *Taming the Dragon* presentation introduces tips and skills around anxiety, particularly for children under 12 years old. The mental health of youth living in poverty will be discussed in this presentation.

The keynote speaker will be Rachel Weldrick, PhD Candidate and Vanier Scholar, who will discuss her research around older adults living on low-income and their experience with social isolation.

Participants in the panel discussion include: June Anderson (Cambridge Self Help Food Bank); Linda Flemming (Community Support Connections); and Sharon Livingstone (Cambridge Council on Aging).

Visit <http://www.spcnd.org/upcoming-events.htm> for more information.

In Case You Missed It

The reKINdle Project

On a beautiful October afternoon, a group of community partners, supporters along with residents and staff of the Village of Winston Park gathered to recognize the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Support of the reKINdle initiative. Read more about this project [here](#).

Supporting Older Adults at Risk (SOAR)

The WWOAS recently hosted two focused dialogues to explore opportunities to strengthen intersectoral approaches to supporting older adults at risk. We look forward to sharing what we heard at these sessions and the opportunity to come together again to confirm and validate proposed viable opportunities.

Special thanks to the members of the WWOAS steering committee, workstreams and working groups for their steadfast dedication and leadership to advancing the strategy in 2019. These 70 people, including 15 community members, are demonstrating the collaborative leadership necessary to bring about health system transformation that works well for older adults, their families, health and social services and those who work within them. We look forward to reporting on our progress in the next newsletter.

Warm wishes to all for a wonderful holiday season. May 2020 bring the best and brightest.



*Looking for more information?
Have something to share?*

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WWOAS reports can be accessed [here](#).