

# Seniors' Voice

## Hamilton Council on Aging (HCoA) Newsletter

Message from the President

Spring 2009 Volume 3

Spring is trying its hardest to take hold as I write you this message. Our year end (March 31<sup>st</sup>) has just passed and it seems a fitting time to review our accomplishments for the year. HCoA and its Board of Directors have had some exciting transitions this past year. We have formalized our role as a Governance Board and have adopted our first Policy Guidelines. These Policies are what will guide us as we move forward as an incorporated not-for-profit agency in Hamilton.

We have hired our first full time Executive Director, Debbie Christie, and since December she has been making valuable connections in the community and is working at expanding community awareness of HCoA and what we are offering to improve the lives of older adults in our community.

The Age Friendly Hamilton project, with funding from the Trillium Foundation, is well underway and we are busy connecting with people over 60 years of age. This project uses the World Health Organization's Guidelines and utilizes focus groups to gain information from seniors in our community about how Hamilton measures up as an age-friendly city. We intend to move forward in the next months to recommend changes that will make Hamilton,

not only the best place to raise a child but also the best place to "raise up their grandparents".

Our other projects in 2008-09 continued thanks to support from the Hamilton Community Foundation and the United Way of Greater Hamilton/Burlington and countless volunteers. In the Tacking Poverty Project, we have provided over 2400 low income seniors with income tax preparation, information about access to community and social services and opportunities to connect in their community.

The Access to Community and Social Services Project for Seniors in diverse communities has progressed well and we have made inroads in mobilizing these seniors to get more involved in their community, develop programs of socialization and education so that they will feel less isolated, more engaged in the wider community and empowered to develop areas of interest.

### IN THIS ISSUE...

- Message from the President
- Membership Drive
- Current Council Activities
- Gerontology as a Discipline
- Volunteers for Tackling Poverty Program
- Community Announcements



*The Hamilton Council on Aging is a United Way Agency*



*Funding provided for Tackling Poverty Together Project*



*Funding provided for Age Friendly Hamilton Project*

St. Peter's Hospital continues to generously provide HCoA with office space and administrative support. We are very appreciative of this partnership, and pleased to be working collaboratively with an organization whose mission of "Enhancing Lives" complements so well the aims of HCoA.

HCoA will be holding a community forum on June 22<sup>nd</sup> at St. Peter's to inform the community about the effects our programming is having on older adults in our community. We invite each of you to attend and be the judge about what HCoA is doing in the community.

We have a number of projects planned for 2009-10 (pending funding) but what has been confirmed is the ongoing work with Age Friendly Hamilton and work with diverse community groups of seniors to educate them about access to health and social services. It is also a given that HCoA will continue to advocate for universal access to home support services; safe and affordable housing and accessible transportation. These important issues continue to guide our activities and efforts. And I am proud to say that all our projects have been implemented with the help of senior volunteers.

Our membership campaign continues and we hope you, our readers, will join HCoA and encourage other individuals and organizations to join as well. We also hope that many of you will volunteer to assist us in the projects described above and in our other activities. We look forward to your participation and support as HCoA works to fulfill its mission of "...educating and advocating for improved aging experiences for older adults through a collaborative network of individuals and organizations."

- Dr. Carolyn J. Rosenthal  
President of the Board



**GET INVOLVED!**

If you are interested in participating in the activities of the Hamilton Council on Aging or receiving information from the Council, please call 905-777-3837, ext. 12238 or complete the form below, and return by mail or fax to:

**Hamilton Council on Aging (HCoA)**  
**c/o St. Peter's Hospital, 88 Maplewood Avenue, Hamilton ON L8M 1W9**  
**Fax: 905-575-5121**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Add me to the mailing list

I would be interested in volunteering with the Council

I would be interested in participating on a project steering committee

## Hamilton Council on Aging (HCoA) CURRENT ACTIVITIES

### ***Age Friendly Hamilton Project***

Working with Ontario Trillium Foundation Funding, HCoA is in the midst of a 2-year project to implement ***Age Friendly Hamilton*** initiatives. To date we have been conducting focus groups with seniors, service providers and caregivers. We have also utilized our community advisory group to help us gain the information needed to move Hamilton towards being an age-friendly community. We will be reporting the preliminary findings of these focus groups at a Community Forum on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, so please plan to attend.

***Tackling Poverty Project***, funded by the Hamilton Community Foundation will be winding down by the end of this tax season in June. The funding covered a 2 year period and accomplished much in that time. We have recruited many volunteers who will continue to provide these services through Revenue Canada and Service Canada. This project has helped seniors to access income benefits such as Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) and other income and social benefits. Many seniors were unaware of these supports until they attended one of HCoA's informational sessions.

Volunteer training for this initiative was successful in bringing individuals from all ages to our organization and gave students much needed experience but also gave seniors the confidence and self-esteem to ensure that they continue being

contributing members of our community. We have really enjoyed this way of reaching out to older people.

HCoA, with United Way Funding, has implemented strategies to address issues of ***Access to Community Supports*** in 6 Hubs this year. Hubs are neighbourhood groups partially funded by the Hamilton Community Foundation to address issues of poverty in some of the most impoverished neighbourhoods in Hamilton. Although in most Hubs the main focus is on activities for children, HCoA made an imprint on these neighbourhoods by keeping the focus on older adults. We stressed that seniors, as a part of the family group, can influence children's well-being and the well-being of communities. We have also mobilized older adults in some of the diverse community groups to take a more active role in these neighbourhoods. This project also helped seniors' services consider issues of culture, language, social isolation, transportation and other systemic barriers that may limit access by some cultural groups to their services. Volunteers, from the diverse communities within the Hubs, were mobilized to provide outreach to their own communities. We are very pleased to announce that the United Way has generously continued this funding to reach out to more diverse groups and increase their access to services for seniors in our community.

## Saving Gerontology as a Discipline

W  
H  
Y  
W  
E  
N  
E  
E  
D  
G  
E  
R  
O  
N  
T  
O  
L  
O  
G  
Y

HCoA has been engaged in activity to support and save the Department of Gerontology at McMaster University. It was announced early in March that the Department of Gerontology would not be taking new applicants in the fall of 2009 and would be moving their focus to the Department of Health, Aging and Society. HCoA felt that we should join the initiative to support Gerontology as a discipline and in doing so we wrote a letter to the Dean and Provost to request a reconsideration of their position to close this area of study.

Historically, it was felt that aging members of society needed caring for and most often that caring was confined to the family. The study of aging as a science was introduced as late as the 1880's by pioneers such as Michel Chevreul, who himself lived to be 102. The term gerontology, taken from the Greek words "geron" or "old man" and "logos" "speech" "to talk about old age", is the study of the social, psychological and biological aspects of aging. Gerontology is distinguished from geriatrics, which is the branch of medicine that studies the disease of the elderly.

Since HCoA, from its earliest days, has promoted healthy and active aging experiences, it was felt that moving the focus from the study of gerontology to a health focus was a step backwards towards the disease model of aging. We don't see aging as primarily a health issue. We believe that there is a need to continue to have the two distinct

undergraduate programs at McMaster.

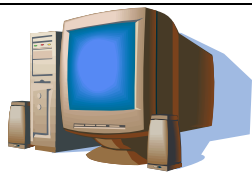
As Canada's aging population continues to grow at an unprecedented rate, the need for experts with advanced education in gerontology increases (Lakehead University website). By the year 2041, an estimated 25% of Canada's population will be over 65 according to the Canada Council. ([www.CanadaCouncil.ca](http://www.CanadaCouncil.ca))

The field of gerontology was developed relatively late, and as such it often lacks the structural and institutional acceptance needed to support an aging population. For instance, few universities have a doctoral degree program in gerontology, McMaster has just had a Master's degree program in the past ?? years.

While the numbers of aging humans, and the maximum ages lived to, grows in the next decade it will be more critical than ever to advance studies of aging. It is felt by HCoA that academic studies must include research on healthy aging and adapt programs to meet the needs of a growing population with different expectations than the previous generation.

On April 30<sup>th</sup> we received a reply to our concerns from Charlotte Yates the Dean of Social Sciences and she assures us in the letter that "McMaster's well-known reputation as a leader in the study of human health and aging is a strong foundation from which to transform the Gerontology program".

If you have any comments about the stand HCoA is taking on this subject don't hesitate to contact us either through our website: [www.coahamilton.ca](http://www.coahamilton.ca) or email: [christde@hhsc.ca](mailto:christde@hhsc.ca)



Visit

[www.coahamilton.ca](http://www.coahamilton.ca) for more information about HCoA. The purpose of the website is to raise awareness about HCoA and key priorities and activities. It will provide regular information and updates on our programs, services and opportunities for seniors to be involved and active in our community. For more information, or if you are a senior or interested in volunteering in any of these programs, please call Jahan Zeb at the Hamilton Council on Aging, (905) 777-3837, x12238.

Join us for our first HCoA Community Forum on June 22, 2009 at the newly opened Alexander Pavilion Auditorium at St. Peter's Hospital. Members are free. Non-members can either pay the \$5.00 membership fee and enjoy lunch for free or pay \$5.00 for a BBQ luncheon provided. We look forward to hearing a panel presentation about the impact of our projects on the community. We will also report on the preliminary findings of the Age Friendly Hamilton focus groups. Please join us to celebrate our accomplishments of 2008-09. Enrolment is limited so please register at 905-777-3837 (ext. 12434) or email [christde@hsc.ca](mailto:christde@hsc.ca)

## Did you know that in Hamilton....?

**Approximately 16.6% seniors are living at or below the poverty line.**

**Hamilton has a large culturally diverse seniors' population - experiencing barriers to services.**

**For full details on the Incomes and Poverty Report in Hamilton go to:**

[www.sprc.hamilton.on.ca/Reports.php#profiles](http://www.sprc.hamilton.on.ca/Reports.php#profiles)

-----  
The Poverty report was funded by:



United Way  
of Burlington  
& Greater Hamilton



### Celebrating Poets over 70 years!

#### Call for Poems

Tower Poetry Society and the McMaster Centre for Gerontological Studies are soliciting poems written after the age of 70. Selected poems will be published in an anthology. "Celebrating Poets over 70" will be the tenth volume in the series:

#### Writing Down Our Years

A maximum of four typed poems may be submitted. Send poems and a 50-word biography by email to Ellen Ryan

([ryaneb@mcmaster.ca](mailto:ryaneb@mcmaster.ca)) or by mail to: "Celebrating Poets over 70", Tower Poetry Society, c/o McMaster University, 1280 Main St. W., Box 1021, Hamilton, Ontario L8S 1C0.

Individuals with poems selected will receive a free copy of the anthology.

**DUE DATE:  
November 15, 2009**



*get into it!*

**The 2008 United Way Campaign accomplished its goal!**

The Hamilton Council on Aging is proud to be an agency of the United Way. The United Way's network of programs and services provide a reliable and effective support system for individuals and families in need. You can **designate your giving to Seniors Issues**. United Way is working to make our communities stronger and healthier places to live and work. **To donate, please call 905-527-4543**

### Send us your ideas for Future Newsletters

If there are interesting tidbits you find that will help to educate older adults please send them to [christde@hhsc.ca](mailto:christde@hhsc.ca) or drop a copy in the mail. Some ideas we have for future newsletters include:

- The state of housing for seniors in Hamilton
- Internet Safety for Seniors
- Emergency Preparations for Seniors
- Coping with Stress
- Your suggestions please!

## Community Announcements

### McMaster Summer Institute and Karl Kinanen Public Lecture

#### **26<sup>th</sup> Annual McMaster Summer Institute on Gerontology 2009**

**Location:** The Waterfront Conference Centre, Hamilton

##### **Theme A**

Integrating Health and Social Care for Older People:  
Lessons from the Ground  
June 15th & 16th, 2009

##### **Theme B**

Diogenes Syndrome:  
"It's All Good Stuff"  
Presented By: Seniors Intervention and Support  
Program, Catholic Family Services of Hamilton  
June 17th, 2009

##### **Theme C**

Creative Aging:  
Engaging Older Adults in Innovative Programs  
Presented By: The National Center for Creative Aging,  
Washington, DC  
June 18th & 19th, 2009

**For more information visit:**

[www.socsci.mcmaster.ca/gerontology/](http://www.socsci.mcmaster.ca/gerontology/)

##### **CONTACT**

McMaster Centre for Gerontological Studies:  
T: 905 525-9140 x24449      F: 905-525-4198  
E: gercntr@mcmaster.ca

#### **16<sup>th</sup> Annual Karl Kinanen Public Lecture**

**Thursday, June 18th**

**"Embrace the Moment: Creativity  
Matters"**

**Presented by:**

**Dr. Andrea Sherman**

**Associate Director of Education and  
Training for the National Center for  
Creative Aging (NCCA)**

**Learn how involvement in  
structured creative arts programs  
can positively affect overall health  
and much more!**

**All are WELCOME to attend this  
FREE public lecture!**

**Location:** McMaster University Medical Centre, Room  
1A6

**Time:** 7:00pm – 8:30pm

**For more information visit:**

[www.socsci.mcmaster.ca/gerontology/](http://www.socsci.mcmaster.ca/gerontology/)

##### **CONTACT**

McMaster Centre for Gerontological Studies:  
T: 905 525-9140 x24449      F: 905-525-4198  
E: gercntr@mcmaster.ca