



# Seniors' Voice

## Hamilton Council on Aging (HCoA) Newsletter

Message from the President

Summer 2009

Volume 4

This edition of our newsletter will be handed out at our FIRST Community Forum which will highlight the great work HCoA has been doing this year. We are reporting to the community the accomplishments of our first full year of service. We are proud of our accomplishments to date and look forward to a firm future of service to seniors in Hamilton.

We can boast a membership of over 200, including individuals, community partners and also businesses that are aligning with us to get information about their target consumers: seniors. We have engaged at least 80 volunteers and without whose services we would not be able to reach as many seniors. These volunteers, seniors, students and others, have helped us with administrative work, income taxes, research, engaging seniors in a variety of ways and mobilizing seniors in their various capacities to become engaged in our work.

We have reached well over 2500 seniors in our various connections in the neighbourhoods of Hamilton and through our partnerships with service providers in the community. Our **Tackling Poverty Project**, funded by the *Hamilton Community Foundation*, to get seniors connected with all the benefits to which they are entitled has played a small part to reduce the poverty rate for seniors in Hamilton since the last census to 16.6% from 24%.

Our work with **Access for Diverse Communities**, funded by the *United Way*, to ensure seniors from various cultural and ethnic groups have all the information they require to gain access to resources in the community culminated on June 4<sup>th</sup> with a **Seniors Information Fair** in Jackson Square which was visited by between 200-300 seniors, many of whom are newcomers to Hamilton. Although there are improvements we can make to this event in years to come, for our first attempt to get the word out to seniors about what is available to them in the community, the evaluations were very favourable.

And last, our **Age Friendly Hamilton Project**, funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation, is progressing on target. We have conducted 11 Focus Groups with Seniors; 1 with Caregivers and 2 with Service Providers. We are in the process of analyzing this data and our

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



*Funding provided for Tackling Poverty Together Project*



*Funding provided for Age Friendly Hamilton Project*

presentation today will highlight some preliminary, general findings that will help to inform our recommendations for changes to make Hamilton a MORE age-friendly community. In keeping with this project, you will read in this edition about a project that Occupational Therapy students from McMaster worked on for our Advisory Committee that will help us to move forward in the year to come with some assessments by seniors of Public Spaces and Buildings and the Walkability of neighbourhoods. We thank all the students who have participated so far in this project as there were others from the Gerontology program who helped with the Focus Groups as well.

As always, I look forward to your continued contributions, 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

# Age Friendly Awards of Excellence

## AGE FRIENDLY AWARDS

During our Age Friendly Focus Groups there was a consistent message that one of the best ways to keep people "aging in place" (in their own homes) and keep them independent with good quality of life is ensuring they have access to grocery shopping. Many participants stated that if they could get out weekly to get their own groceries they felt more able to be engaged in active, positive aging. In the downtown core and outlying areas of Hamilton this was one of the most challenging aspects to the aging experience. When asked about suggestions for change many groups stated that free bus service to a shopping centre or grocery facility would help to support the aging experience.

**FORTINOS**, part of the Loblaws Food Service Chain was singled out as providing this service in several locations. We moved ahead to contact the locations that provided this service to Hamilton Seniors and are pleased to award 6 locations with the:

### 2009 AGE FRIENDLY HAMILTON FIRST ANNUAL AWARD OF EXCELLENCE !

- FORTINOS EASTGATE MALL
- FORTINOS MALL ROAD
- FORTINOS UPPER CENTENNIAL
- FORTINOS DUNDURN PLAZA
- FORTINOS HWY 8
- FORTINOS UPPER JAMES ST.

We congratulate these locations for innovative services contributing to the health, independence and high quality of life of seniors in Hamilton

### VOLUNTEERS WHO HAVE GONE ABOVE AND BEYOND!

It is not easy to single out just a few of our volunteers for outstanding service to older adults in the past year. All our volunteers are valued no matter how many hours or what they do towards making life better for seniors in Hamilton.

Having said that, we agonized at paring down the list and have recommended the following volunteers for the:

### 2009 Award of Volunteer Excellence

Luci Barichello  
Joan Coultres  
Elta Hull  
Phillip Kam  
Yien Yun Kao  
Shwan Kakamad  
Gurcharan Mander  
Norman Newbery  
Zafar Siddiqui  
Kathryn Thorup  
Man Tse  
Jian Wang  
Maryam Yusuf

SINCERE THANKS TO ALL OUR  
VOLUNTEERS FOR THE MANY HOURS  
OF WORK AND SERVICE TO OLDER  
ADULTS IN HAMILTON



# Assessing Age-Friendliness

In Ontario, the aging population continues to grow and will double over the next 16 years. In an effort to ensure that older adults are able to continue participating in community life, cities around the world are trying to become more "age-friendly". The World Health Organization (WHO) describes an age-friendly city as a place that promotes quality of life for older people by enhancing opportunities for health, participation and security. The Age-Friendly Hamilton Committee (AFHC), a sub-committee of HCoA, is committed to the development of age-friendly initiatives. One strategy is to assess the age-friendliness of outdoor spaces and public buildings in Hamilton. Results of these environmental assessments will be used to identify barriers to older adult participation and facilitate recommendations to increase the age-friendliness of Hamilton.

As students in McMaster's Occupational Therapy program, we partnered with the AFHC to identify an assessment tool that could be used to assess the age-friendliness of outdoor spaces and public buildings. Through an extensive literature search 14 possible assessment tools were identified and evaluated. According to the WHO, important factors to include in age-friendly environmental assessments are the physical environment, green spaces and walkways, outdoor seating, pavements, roads, traffic, cycle paths, safety, services, buildings and public toilets.

There was no tool that assessed both indoor spaces AND public buildings.

Therefore, 2 assessment tools were selected. The Neighbourhood Walking Survey (NWS) was chosen to assess the age-friendliness of outdoor spaces. Volunteers walk a neighbourhood route and identify important places, transportation stops, street crossings, and potentially unsafe areas in the neighbourhood. A rating form is used to rate the route according to 25 factors. Volunteers are asked to record comments and make recommendations for improvements. A few changes were made to make the NWS easier to use and it was renamed the Neighbourhood Walking Survey-Revised (NWS-R). Versions of the NWS have been used in the United States and Canada.

The Community Health and Environment Checklist (CHEC) was chosen to assess the age-friendliness of public buildings in Hamilton. The tool includes 63 questions organized into five sections including building entrance, indoor usability, restrooms, amenities, and safety. The purpose of using the CHEC is to identify features of public buildings that facilitate or hinder building use. A comments section was added to help identify areas that need improvement. The CHEC is comprehensive and easy to use.

**The next phase of the project will be to develop a plan to complete the age-friendly assessments using the NWS-R and the CHEC. Older adult volunteers will be needed to complete the assessments and make recommendations to improve the age-friendliness of Hamilton.**

Submitted by:  
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