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Welcome Aboard!

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Small changes have a Big Impact

As summer winds down and we prepare for the autumn colours to come, *Neighbours in Aging* takes a reflective turn. This issue is dedicated to asking the big questions around our collective aging experience, and how making small but significant changes has a positive impact.

We are lucky to call New Brunswick home. Despite our obvious challenges, we as New Brunswickers have a sense of community, an innate ability to laugh at ourselves, and the drive to make a difference when it counts. And, the more of us who share our gifts and talents, the better off we all are.

In this issue, we hear the story of a community rising to address the challenge of food security in their area, the travels of a retired school teacher exploring aging in another culture, and three university students laying the groundwork to hear and understand the voice of informal caregivers.

Much like a water droplet, each of these initiatives developed from an idea. Once shared and put into action, their ripples are felt by many, reaching beyond their original intention, and contributing in unexpected but very important ways.



We'd love to hear from you

Have a story you would like to share? Do you know of an initiative in your community that is having big impact? Please get in touch with us.

Neighbours in Aging is your newsletter and we welcome your stories describing the healthy aging journey as it is experienced in NB.

Happy Reading,

Beth Arsenault

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Forest Dale Nursing Home

Lowering its walls and reaching out through food security

by Vicki Caissie and Elizabeth Gorman

Community Partnership is evident at Forest Dale Home in the community of Riverside-Albert with the non-profit organization Foods of the Fundy Valley.



Many hands make light work. Photo credit: Forest Dale Home

Monthly, the Community Food Smart "bulk-purchasing produce club" meets at Forest Dale Home to pack bags of fresh fruits and vegetables. The club works to improve food security to the citizens of the Alma, Riverside-Albert, Curryville, Lower Cape, New Horton and Harvey communities, who do not have access to a grocery store. The packing is done by volunteers from the various communities served, as well as some of the residents living at Forest Dale Home.

This service provides fresh food to people of all socioeconomic levels. Forest Dale is happy to partner in this initiative by providing a room and the opportunity to share our home with the local communities - it is a great social time for everyone.

This spring Foods of the Fundy Valley and the Shepody Food Bank led the build of the Riverside Community Garden. This project is largely supported by a generous grant that Shepody Food Bank received from Food Banks Canada, Community Food Action Grant and the Compass

Group. The Forest Dale Home, also one of the main partners, has provided the land and water for the garden along with much other support. The garden plots are used by local citizens, residents' families, staff and the Shepody Food Bank. Foods of the Fundy Valley with volunteers from the United Way helped establish perennial flower beds, a large rhubarb patch, raised strawberry gardens with easy access for those in wheelchairs and a cucumber trellis which provides shelter from the sun for the seniors.



One of the many gardens located on the Forest Dale Home grounds, with strawberries in the raised bed and cucumbers in the background. Photo credit: Forest Dale Home

Food of the Fundy Valley regularly hosts educational sessions for its members and the general public at the Forest Dale Home. Residents enjoy attending the sessions and sharing their knowledge from past experiences. This partnership ensures their experience is retained and shared with the younger generations."

For more information, please contact Forest Dale Home's Vicki Caissie to learn how you can develop a similar project in your community: 506.882.3015 or fdh.administration@nb.aibn.com.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.
~Margaret Mead



Adagio-Seniors

Promoting the Dance of Aging Gracefully

Adagio-Seniors connects all who are interested in the Aging process with the intention of broadening our cultural understanding of the multiple facets of Aging. Adagio-seniors is dedicated to presenting Aging as a period of endless possibilities.

I had the opportunity to chat with Jeanne Brideau to learn more about Adagio-Seniors. Please read our exchange below.

What is your role with Adagio-Seniors?

I am the initiator of this social project which aims to celebrate the privilege of Aging. Seniors are the salt of the earth, the guardians of our country's values and traditions. Seniors are the bounty of harvest, the dispensers of wisdom and experience. We, the Adagio-seniors Team, wish to highlight the wisdom and beauty of the elders we know and admire.

How did the idea of Adagio-Seniors transpire?

It came about after accompanying my parents on their aging journey. I was struck by how they aged differently. My mother suffered from a mild form of dementia, but severe enough that she had to leave the family home and be cared for in a residence. My father on the other hand lived a very active life and was driving his car preceding the month of his death at the great age of 95.

Adagio is a musical term that means to play in a leisurely manner or to dance a sequence of graceful movements.

Yes. It seems to me that many seniors have learned to dance their lives in such a graceful manner. Adagio-seniors is an *ode* to these elders who have understood that aging can be a positive experience. It aims also to entice others to let go of feelings of fear, anxiety and self-doubt and to join in the celebratory dance.

You recently returned from visiting your daughter in Australia and had the opportunity to interview elders while traveling in Vietnam.

Yes, and it's one of the many special moments in my life. I traveled the length of the country from Ho Chi Minh City to the Sapa mountain range that borders with China. The Vietnamese are a friendly people who seize every opportunity to practice their English language skills. It was in the nation's capital of Hanoi where I met Nguyen Le Hoai An and Dao Thuy Linh, two high school students wanting to practice their English, and who made it possible to chat with seniors. All three of us were blown away by our chance interviews along Hoàn Kiếm Lake.



Were there any particular seniors whose stories stood out or touched you?

One was 84 year old photographer Quang Phung who has been taking photos since 1972 and witnessed and captured many things through the camera and the lens of

Aging gracefully continued...

experience – war and famine, but also the richness of the lives of those who survived. He has been capturing these moments so future generations know and understand from whence they came.



Jeanne Brideau holding Quang Phung's book of photography showcasing moments of his life's work.

I was especially touched by an elderly grandmother who was responsible for the upbringing of her grandchildren. There are very little government social supports in Vietnam, so as the end of the month draws near she can be found selling chocolate bars and bottled water under a tree. Those who frequent the lake know her well and purchase items so she can feed her family. Community social supports are alive and well in Vietnam.

What did their stories convey about the culture of aging in Vietnam?

In their lifetime, Vietnamese seniors have experienced wars, famine and the reconstruction of their country. They are grateful for the little they have, they strive to keep fit, and many still work. In our privileged, peaceful country we could perhaps connect more frequently with

feelings of gratitude as well as pride in our aging bodies. It seems to me that seniors in Vietnam are proud – of their country, their families, and of lives lived. Are Canadians proud of their long life, proud of their role in building the country we know, proud of their grey hair and wrinkled hands? These are the types of questions I ask and one reason for initiating Adagio-seniors.

So it sounds like you are a lot of the big questions in hopes to shift the cultural paradigm around aging.

The paradigm *is* changing. It's so obvious. In the last five years alone, we have seen seniors portrayed in a positive light, whether it's on TV, in movies or the papers. But we as seniors cannot be spectators and expect the shift to come from outside. Why are we waiting for government or NGOs to bring about change? We as New Brunswick Seniors need to put aside our humble nature and be active participants in this important dialogue.

Much like a grain of sand, it's with many grains of sand that become a beach. The change we are seeking needs to come from all of us – young and old.

For more information on Adagio-Seniors and their programming, please contact Jeanne Brideau through Adagio's website <http://www.adagio-seniors.ca/>.

Informal Caregiving in NB:

Successes, Shortcomings and a Path Forward

The Collaborative has the privilege to guide a social action placement for three social work students from St. Thomas University this fall. Morgan Downs, Carly Furlong and Erin Jackson will explore the hidden socioeconomic cost of informal caregiving in the province by shedding light on the important contribution caregivers provide in sustaining our present healthcare system, investigate ways to better support them, and educate on the policies that positively or negatively affect informal caregivers.

We are excited to work with them and learn what they discover through their placement. You will be hearing more about their research in the coming weeks. Welcome aboard ladies! ☺