

Tools for Living Well

Assistive devices to help prevent falls

Issue 2

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What's new with "Tools for Living Well" project?

This summer our project has made incredible progress. The four Site Coordinators have presented to community groups, service providers and business associations, helping to spread the word about the devastating effect that falls can have on an older adult's independence, and the need to prevent falls.

They have showcased the assistive devices that are featured in this project – bathtub grab bars, bath seats, non-slip bath mats, canes and hip protectors – on local television shows, in community seniors fairs and in seniors

centres. Each site has established and is working with a Community Action Team (CAT). CAT members are local business people, members of community organizations, service providers, seniors, veterans and legion members who know their community well. Their role is to guide the project and advise the Site Coordinators on how to tailor the project to their community.

Site Coordinators have also recruited senior volunteers to help with the project implementation. The role of these volunteers is to help recruit local

businesses and to provide ongoing support to the businesses throughout the project.

Two of our sites have senior volunteers. In two sites, the Site Coordinator will be responsible for recruiting and supporting participating businesses. This allows us to compare the two methods of approaching and working with businesses so that we understand some of the advantages and disadvantages of each.

We're excited about the progress being made across the country. We're sure you will be too.



PEI volunteer Barbara MacAusland tries on hip protectors.

Highlights from the Pilot Sites

Here's just a sample of the exciting things that are going on across the country:

In **Nanaimo, B.C.**, there is a team of 6 senior volunteers who received their training in July. They are working with the CAT to prioritize the local businesses and make recruitment visits. The Site Coordinator (Heather Gillespie) was a guest on the "Rotary on the Air" radio show and on a New VI Television show called "New Day".

In **Calgary, Alberta**, the diversity of the CAT is a great benefit as they work to prioritize the businesses that they wish to approach. Their local census results are helping to identify pockets of seniors for a more targeted approach. The Site Coordinator (Carie Lee Watters) will be recruiting and supporting businesses.

In **Gatineau, Quebec**, there is an active and committed CAT. They have sent letters to all hotels in the region describing the project and followed up with

phone calls. The Site Coordinator (Ginette Asselin) has 1 Senior Volunteer working with her. Ginette will recruit and support participating businesses.

In **PEI**, there is a group of 7 senior volunteers working with the Site Coordinator (Marie Brine). So far, 10 local businesses, mostly retailers, have agreed to participate. Many have requested education for their staff. The Atlantic Building Supply Dealers (23 PEI members) have requested a package of information for each store.

Test Your Knowledge

1. What do David Brinkley, Dr. Robert Atkins (of "Atkins diet" fame) and sports announcer Chick Hearn have in common?

2. Assistive devices are only important for people with physical disabilities.
True or False

3. If I use assistive devices like a cane or walker, people will think that I'm old and crippled.
True or False

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...“for the seniors, there is an advantage in knowing what the tools are and also the advantage of teaching those who have the ability to offer these tools to seniors”
Senior Volunteer

“ [the benefit is] for the hotel to be recognized as being an enterprise that cares about the well-being of all its customers of all ages”.
CAT member

We asked our volunteers “What do you believe are the benefits of this project?”

They saw benefits...

...to the volunteers working on the project:

- discussions and information exchange between professionals and seniors who share common concerns.
- the ability to make a contribution.
- their ideas respected and valued.

... to the businesses

- improved customer

service.

- goodwill and making a difference in the community.

...to the community:

- recognition as a community concerned with the safety of seniors and people of all ages.
- Increased awareness of falls, of the devastating impact of falls on older adults and of the need for falls

prevention, including the benefits of assistive devices.

- shift in the attitude of business owners or operators who are renting, building or otherwise dealing with accommodations and housing. They now recognize the importance of installing tools to increase safety.
- Fewer preventable injuries and lower health care costs.

The PEI Community Action Team (CAT) and Senior Volunteers

Front: Barbara MacAusland, Melodie MacNeill, Olive Bryanton, Marie Brine (site coordinator), Doreen Nicholson

Back: David Forsythe, Bruce Barrett, Jim Fraser, Rob Campbell

Not shown: Colleen Murray, David Olafson, Joe McAskill, Roxanne Carmody



What kinds of people volunteer for the project

- People who use assistive devices and people who don't.
- Members of local Seniors Centres, ALCOA, walking clubs, church groups, etc.
- Proud parents and grandparents.
- Representatives from retail, tourism, hotel and the building industries.
- Healthcare and seniors services providers.
- Representatives from Veterans Affairs and Canada Mortgage and Housing.
- People who care about making their community a healthier and safer place for people of all ages!



...to all of our volunteers for their hard work!

How did you do? Answers to the quiz on page 1

1. All three of these high profile people died from complications following a fall.
2. **False.** At one time Velcro was only used for people who couldn't manage buttons and remote controls were only used for people
3. **False.** Canes and walkers are just tools to help you do the things

who couldn't move to reach television dials. Now, most of us use these all the time! Assistive devices can make all of our lives easier.

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you want to do, like remain in your home and neighbourhood safely. You use other tools every day, whether they are can openers or wheelbarrows.

It's all in your attitude.