



**The Good Companions
Seniors' Centre**
Supporting a Vibrant Community

COMBATTING SOCIAL ISOLATION IN OLDER ADULTS THROUGH THE SENIORS' CENTRE WITHOUT WALLS

Presenters: Emily Payne, Seniors' Centre Without Walls Coordinator, and Rana Yassine, Seniors' Centre Without Walls Program Assistant at The Good Companions Seniors' Centre

June 8th, 2023



OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENTATION

- What is a Seniors' Centre Without Walls?
- History of The Good Companions & the Seniors' Centre Without Walls Program
- What We Do & Who We Serve
- Why We Do It
- Statistics
- Testimonials
- Expansion Project

WHAT IS A SENIORS' CENTRE WITHOUT WALLS?

- An entirely telephone-based program (no internet or computer required!)
- Provides a space where participants can engage with their peers without ever having to leave the house
- Allows participants the opportunity to engage in discussion based programs to beat social isolation, enjoy brain stimulating activities, and hear presentations about a variety of topics that provide information on health and services that they may not be able to access elsewhere

WHY THE PHONE?



HISTORY OF THE GOOD COMPANIONS & SENIORS' CENTRE WITHOUT WALLS

- The Good Companions Seniors' Centre is a registered non-profit established in 1955, offering a wide variety of in-person services, programs for LGBTQ2+ older adults, as well as community support services for older adults 55+ and adults 18+ with physical disabilities
- The Seniors' Centre Without Walls (SCWW) began in 2015 as a three-year pilot project funded by the Ontario Trillium foundation, serving older adults 55+ and adults 18+ with disabilities in Ottawa and surrounding areas
- We now receive funding from The United Way of Eastern Ontario, The Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, and the City of Ottawa
- We also run programs twice a week in Mandarin
- Starting up a French program this summer



WHAT WE DO

- Offer 14 programs per week on a wide variety of topics – we even run programs on Christmas Eve and New Years Eve!
- Facilitate appropriate referrals for clients both within the agency and out in the community in order to provide them with wraparound services
- Host planning committees to give participants the opportunity to provide feedback and suggest program ideas
- Provide access to information and services through presentations that participants may not otherwise have, which in one case was life-saving
- Follow-up calls with participants we have not heard from in a while as a wellness check



WHO WE SERVE

- A large number of our clients are homebound due to illness, mobility issues, mental health issues, etc.
- Many clients are isolated from family and friends
- Ages range is anywhere from 55-95
- There is a great deal of diversity within the group – we serve folks from all different backgrounds and life experiences
- Not all participants are isolated; some have very active social lives but enjoy the community they find within the group or the information provided in presentations

WHY WE DO IT: SOCIAL ISOLATION IN OLDER ADULTS

- Social Isolation is a risk factor of reduced social skills and can have psychological and cognitive affects of seniors including high levels of depression, anxiety and or illness
- Significant increase in premature mortality comparable to or greater than the risk factors of smoking and obesity
- 50% increased risk of developing dementia
- Significant risk factors for developing coronary heart disease and stroke
- Loneliness is also a predictor of suicide among older adults aged 65 and older
- Can increase the risk of elder abuse

WHY WE DO IT: WHAT MAKES SCWW'S UNIQUE

- No waiting lists as we can serve 30+ people per program
- Participants get to speak with their peers
- Because the phone is so accessible, participants can interact with others from different backgrounds and walks of life in ways they may not otherwise
- It is *truly* accessible
- Services come at no cost to clients
- Complete flexibility – so often older adults face assumptions about what they want or even have choices made for them. With SCWW they can participate as much or as little as they would like, they have the choice of calling in or being called, whether or not they get reminder calls half an hour before the program, and the type of programs they like!

STATISTICS: 2020-2022

Year	Number of Programs	Participations	Average per Program
2020	707	10,599	15/program
2021	619	9,389	15/program
2022	564	9,525	17/program

2023 (SO FAR)

Month	Number of Programs	Participations	Average/program
January	46	994	21/program
February	49	1065	22/program
March	58	1266	22/program
April	48	967	20/program

“ THE SCWW TO ME IS A WARM FUZZY BLANKET WHEN THE WORLD IS COLD. AND IF THINGS ARE GETTING TOO HOT AND OVERWHELMING IN YOUR LIFE, IT IS ALSO A COOL LEMONADE DRINK THAT COOLS YOU OFF AND GIVES YOU WHAT YOU NEED. IN THESE PROGRAMS, I FEEL THAT I’M SPECIAL – I FEEL THAT I MATTER. ”

-Suzanne, participant since 2020



“ THE SENIORS’ CENTRE WITHOUT WALLS CAME TO ME AS THE ANSWER TO A PRAYER. THE PROGRAM IS A SOURCE OF HOPE AND JOY AND MAKES ME FEEL INCLUDED, SUPPORTED, AND VALUED. ”

-Anna, participant since 2022



SCWW EXPANSION PROJECT

- The Good Companions received funding from a private donor to help train new organizations across Ontario and the Atlantic provinces to run their own SCWWs
- Supports offered for new SCWWs include access to training materials, networking sessions, workshops on grant-writing and finding sustainable funding, and more!
- For more information on our Expansion Project, please contact Emily Payne via email at epayne@thegoodcompanions.ca or via phone at 613-236-0428 extension 2323



CONCLUSION: NOTHING IS
EVER BROKEN THAT WE
CAN'T FIX TOGETHER

QUESTIONS & CONTACT INFORMATION

Emily Payne, Seniors' Centre Without Walls Coordinator:
epayne@thegoodcompanions.ca, 613-236-0428 ext 2323

Rana Yassine, Seniors' Centre Without Walls Program
Assistant: ryassine@thegoodcompanions.ca, 613-236-0428
ext 2390