

2024 Sinai Health/UHN Geriatrics Institute Education Day

Thursday June 20th; 9:00 AM – 3:30 PM EST

“It’s never too late to reach Paradise Falls”

Institute Story

Carl Fredricksen and his wife, Ellie, have spent their lives together, exploring the city and dreaming of traveling to Paradise Falls. Paradise Falls has been named the best city in the world for older adults, because it boasts age-friendly supports and services, high quality geriatric care and supports, accessible and affordable housing and transportation, in a culturally diverse and inclusive place. Like many other ageing adults, they aspire to retire and enjoy their golden years there.

After being married for 40 years, Ellie became ill and passed away. Carl was so used to having Ellie around, that he became disoriented after her passing and developed depression. Ellie used to take care of their household needs and managed their finances, and provided Carl with all the stability he needed for him to focus on his work as a scientist. Now that she is gone. Carl has lost his will to live. He has been spending his days in bed, barely feeds himself, and hasn’t left the house. He has completely lost touch with the world around him.

Unfortunately, life hasn’t waited for Carl. The bank has been sending him letters about their mortgage payments, a real estate company has been leaving him voice messages about an offer to buy his house, his doctor’s office has left messages about his ongoing health concerns, and well-wishers have been dropping off food at the front porch, as they have otherwise been unable to access him.

Carl eventually lost his house to foreclosure and missing out on the opportunity to sell his house as well. Due to his failing health and nutrition, he ends up in the hospital after having sustained a fall that he couldn’t get himself off the floor, where the grief of not having Ellie by his side continues manifests itself in new challenging behaviours when he also develops an associated delirium during his hospitalization. After losing Ellie, he has no other family around.

Fortunately, his care team at the hospital help to give him hope. Different volunteers have been spending time with him playing games, talking science and research, and other ways to re-engage this smart person. Not only that, the health care professionals were very patient and understanding towards him, and spent time explaining the various options available and consequences for each. As he no longer has a home in the community, and little in the way of savings, it is determined that his best option will likely be to be admitted to a local LTC home rather than a local homeless shelter.

The day before his transfer to the LTC home, he dreams about Ellie, who reminds him of their desire to retire in Paradise Falls. The dream is so vivid that he wakes up, and draws a plan for his escape from the hospital and journey to Paradise Falls. He had taken a liking to one of Sinai Health’s MAUVE program volunteers, Russell, who is also a boy scout. He calls Russell in the morning, explains his plan, and Russell agrees to help Carl.

Carl has now found a new meaning to his life.

Together with Russell, they construct a hot air balloon, big enough to fit a bed, a desk and a small fridge, and they start their journey to Paradise Falls where Carl is hoping he can live out the rest of his life...