

Senior Issues

Since last September Valley East Community Action Network –VECAN- has become actively involved with the Older Adult community which presently faces many challenges and barriers associated with aging.

VECAN Senior Committee has become a stronger advocate for ensuring that the future needs of our aging population will be met. Members have become more aware of the growing concerns facing our seniors by:

- attending a variety of Senior Fairs, such as Empowering Seniors of Northern Ontario, ESNO Conference, in October 2007; Building Linkages: The Mayors and Council's Advisory Panel on Seniors Issues May 2008;
- participating in a variety of focus group meetings such as: The greater Sudbury Seniors' Community Network, and the Seniors Community Association SCA;
- being members of CARP.

A VECAN survey of about 300 seniors in the Valley expressed the need for an English Older Adult Centre. VECAN Senior Committee has taken the initiative to determine the feasibility of starting such a group in the Valley and of researching avenues available to the group, such as start-up financial support from the municipality and other resources. Finding the right location is crucial. Parkside Older Adult Centre is willing to become our best mentor; we now need commitment from the municipality for financial assistance.

VECAN Senior Committee members are also promoting the accessibility of French Language Services for French seniors in the area. Some members are closely associated with Club D'Age d'Or and FAFO, La Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario, and attended their annual assembly in Noelville last October.

Some members are becoming quite familiar with the services provided by North East Community Care Access (CCAC) and Centre D'accès aux soins communautaires. It is vital that these groups be given all the support needed to enable seniors to remain in their homes as long as possible. Seniors need to know that, if they qualify, this service is at no charge to them.

VECAN Senior Committee is in the process of organizing a Senior Fair on Saturday, September 6th, during Valley East Days. By promoting what the Valley presently has to offer, we hope to encourage seniors' interest in the areas of health, social activities, the arts, fitness and wellness.

VECAN Senior Committee supports the recommendations from the Friendly To Seniors Report on Challenges of Aging. For Valley seniors, our priority recommendations from the above report would be:

- The development of more reasonably priced, independent living, senior types of housing because we have a large population of seniors in the Valley;
- The development of Senior Supportive Housing in the Valley, such as Lively's MeadowBrook, with the help of similar grants from Long Term Care Grants, as obtained for the new complex being built in Chelmsford. We would welcome more information in this regard;
- Monetary incentives and better home care to allow seniors to remain as independent as possible;
- The creation of an English Older Adult Centre to advocate for the needs of seniors in the area. "Seniors Are Someone Special Year-Round"

- Monetary Support from the municipality to hold a monthly Senior Health Fair in the shopping mall;
- Present opportunities for active living: provide safer walking areas, clear snow, salt sidewalks;
- Free bus service for seniors from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., with a special shuttle bus service from outlying areas to senior events;
- The creation of an Activity Resource Bank for all seniors, similar to the Volunteer Bank Service, matching the activity with the need of individual seniors. If established as a website, monetary support would be required for initial start-up.

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Chair, Vecan Senior Committee