

# Chapter Four

## Innovative and Creative Approaches

*Innovative, creative approaches are used to ensure sustainability and contribute to the mental well-being of seniors.*



# Around the Dinner Table

The *Around the Dinner Table* program is designed to create spaces for seniors at risk of social isolation to take part in meaningful conversation in a safe space, and enjoy a good meal at the same time.

The program guide (see in reference section) can be adapted but the concept of the story circle and its facilitation guidelines are important to ensuring respect for each guest's voice and perspective, an important part of creating an environment of emotional acceptance.



Want to learn more, check out the video on Youtube <https://youtu.be/B6OE--vIMRw>



AROUND THE  
DINNER TABLE  
Program



**INVITATION**  
We would like to ask your organization to take part in a MIND-BODY-SPIRIT Project pilot session for the *Around the Dinner Table* program. For more information please contact project coordinator Dawn Ostrem at [mindbodyspiritpc.dkmchc@gmail.com](mailto:mindbodyspiritpc.dkmchc@gmail.com) or call 902-633-5890

*"As a host, I learned a lot about the importance of reaching out to seniors who are isolated and the effect it can have on one's mental health."*

"The table is one of the most intimate places in our lives. It is there that we give ourselves to one another. When we say, 'Take some more, let me serve you another plate, let me pour you another glass, don't be shy, enjoy it,' we say a lot more than words express. We invite our friends to become part of our lives. We want them to be nurtured by the same food and drink that nurture us. We desire communion. Every breakfast, lunch, or dinner can become a time of growing communication with one another."  
—Henri Nouwan, *Bread For The Journey*

# Friendly Visitor Program

## *Communities help to reduce social isolation through Seniors Friendly Visitors Programs*

Older adults are at increased risk for loneliness and social isolation because they are more likely to live alone, may be dealing with health issues or a chronic illness, or may have experienced loss of a loved one, family and friends. Socially isolated seniors are more at risk of negative health behaviours including drinking, smoking, being sedentary and not eating well; have a higher likelihood of falls; and, have a four-to-five times greater risk of hospitalization.

Typically, these program are designed to support isolated seniors who can benefit from a visit from a volunteer who has been provided with training and are asked to commit to a number of hours per week to visit a senior. The commitment is often only

1- 2 hours per week and at their mutual convenience and location. Visits can occur in the seniors' home or for example, a trip to a local coffee shop or time spent sharing activities, playing cards, taking walks, doing crafts; or most often, just enjoying a pleasant conversation

Seniors are often referred to the program from different service providers in the community. The program matches those who are isolated with a volunteer who will visit regularly to provide companionship and conversation.

## Quotes from Participants

*"It has inspired me to begin trying my own recipes and using more healthy produce."*

*"I will use what I have learned to make my life easier as I loved participating in this workshop and learning."*



The purpose of our Friendly Visitor program was to provide friendship and companionship to seniors in the Strait-Richmond area who would benefit from stronger social connections. The program was designed to provide friendship and companionship to those at risk of feeling socially isolated in our communities by helping to match visitors with seniors. While these kinds of relationships tend to take place naturally in small communities, where people look out for one another, social isolation can sometimes be hard to see.

The program was also designed to provide caregivers with breaks, to increase intergenerational relationships and support seniors with tasks if applicable. For example, during weekly visits arranged at a mutually agreed upon time, visitors might chat, play games or go out for coffee. Younger volunteers may show their friend's items of interest on the Internet or teach new digital skills. Depending on the interests of both parties, people may cook together, hang pictures, sew, or repair a household item.

The following goals were identified:

- Provide seniors at risk of becoming socially isolated with meaningful one-to-one relationships with volunteers.
- Provide seniors with moments of happiness in the present, and something to look forward to in the immediate future.
- Decrease seniors' social isolation thereby increasing their quality of life.
- Provide an enriching experience for Friendly Visitor volunteers, as well as the seniors they visit.

The Friendly Visitor program was offered as a pilot program as part of the Mind Body and Spirit project, with only a few volunteers initially so we could then assess any adjustments and improvements that would be needed. Unfortunately, it was determined that we did not have the required resources and staff capacity to continue. Offering a program such as this requires recruitment and coordinating volunteers, providing training and matching them with seniors. In addition, locating seniors that wanted to have a visitor also requires some effort. Especially seniors that are often social isolated or not wanting to share they might benefit from a volunteer visitor and companionship.

Several communities are offering warm telephone lines and in other communities throughout Nova Scotia the seniors' safety coordinator offer a version of this when they work with older adults in their communities. In some communities, local churches provide outreach and many seniors clubs do the same on a more informal basis.

# Food Preservation/Food Security

## The Connection Between Food Security and Mental Health Outcomes in Seniors

Food insecurity is the lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life and is a serious and growing problem among the older adult population. Food insecurity is also often linked to chronic disease such as diabetes, heart disease, and can contribute to or worsen mental health issues like depression and anxiety.

Food insecurity in seniors is often hidden and is often further complicated by social isolation, physical and mental challenges, lack of transportation as well as limited financial resources. Within Richmond County, transportation and access to healthy, affordable, safe and fresh produce are often significant challenges. Many seniors do not live within walking distance of a grocery store and when living alone or dealing with health issues, may not be inclined to prepare meals for themselves.

As part of the Mind, Body, And Spirit Project we wanted to emphasize the importance of food security and its' connection to mental health and offer an opportunity for seniors to come together, learn and share their knowledge.

### Quotes from Participants

*"It has inspired me to begin trying my own recipes and using more healthy produce."*

*"I will use what I have learned to make my life easier an I loved participating in this workshop and learning."*

## FOOD PRESERVATION WORKSHOPS FOR SENIORS



As part of the MIND-BODY-SPIRIT Project for seniors, 3 sessions (9-4pm) will be held in 3 communities:

- OCT 25 - L'Ardoise (Kingston Community Health Centre)
- OCT 26 - River Bourgeois (Tara Lynn Community Centre)
- OCT 27 - D'Escousse (D'Escousse Community Hall)

### AM Session: FERMENTATION

Learn to preserve food the old-fashioned way when crocks of real sauerkraut and cucumber pickles provided the healthy benefits of fermented foods. Supplies and foods provided.

### PM Session: GARBAGE PAIL ROOT CELLAR

Learn to build a small root cellar to store food at no expense. Supplies provided.



### TO REGISTER

Call 902-587-2800

or email: [mindbodyspiritpc.dkmchc@gmail.com](mailto:mindbodyspiritpc.dkmchc@gmail.com)



# Food Preservation/Food Security

The one day session included a session on fall food preservation using lacto-fermentation, an age-old process of storing vegetables (either grown or purchased on sale) for long periods of time. Fermentation is a safe and healthy way to store food products and the process is much simpler, and less expensive, than canning or pickling.

The afternoon session included the creation of a garbage pail root cellar to store foods over the winter. Some low-income seniors in Richmond County own and live on their own properties. Many have some land and the ability to grow, preserve and store food.

Reaching out to local farmers and older adults that have knowledge and experience to share about food preservation are great partners in offering these types of sessions. In some communities, the local municipality also offers programs such as this.



# Seniors Connecting Through Technology

Older adults are embracing technology more than ever. Many are purchasing or being gifted laptops, smart phones and tablets and have great plans to use them. Many are eager to learn, but still lack the confidence about using them. Low technology literacy, including lack of familiarity with tech terminology, does not have to be a barrier to the seniors' adoption of new technology.



There may already be similar programs being offered in your community. Connecting older adults through technology is an important step to help reduce social isolation. While it was the local literacy organization that partnered during this project, other opportunities may be available with local high schools, youth groups, or community colleges with students who have knowledge to share in technology. Local businesses may be able to assist with donating older lap tops or cell phones.



Nursing homes in communities have also been offering this type of program for their residents.

Older adults often need more encouragement to learn about and use technologies that could enhance their quality of life.

For some older adults, the possible use of technology is a foreign concept. For some, barriers include lack of accessibility to technology use due to inadequate Internet service, financial restraints, or lack of confidence in their own ability to use technology. Therefore, increasing their capacity to adopt and use technologies is important as are technologies that are user-friendly and accessible.

One of the initiatives of the project was a partnership with the **Richmond County Literacy Network** to offer a program called **Seniors Connecting through Technology**.

## Richmond County Literacy Network

Richmond County Literacy network was a perfect partner to offer this program. As an organization, they already provided computer training as one of their core programs and also had experience working with older adults.



Through a partnership agreement funds were provided directly to the Literacy Network to develop a program, purchase iPads and offer both one-on-one and group training over a series of weeks to 31 participants.

- 6** from local nursing home and seniors housing.
- 25** members from the community.
- 17** required connectivity, which was provided for one year free of charge.
- 27** were provided with iPads and one with a laptop.

### Where to look in your community

You may find there are already programs like this in your community, but if you wish to get one going, your local Literacy organization, would be a great resource. This program is also well suited for an intergenerational project with a local high school, or community college that offers computer science that matches students with older adults.

Local libraries are often a great resource as well, some offering similar programs.



### Quotes from Participants

*"The iPad is my new best friend. Being connected has given me hope."*

*"Because of the iPad I am now interacting with my neighbours more and the outside world."*

*"I dreaded getting out of bed in the morning, now I can FaceTime my daughter every day."*

*"The program has made it easier for me to stay in touch with my grandchildren."*

*"I am using FaceTime to call my son and grandchildren."*

*"It gave me a chance to get out of my depression and took a lot of my problems away."*

If you would like to hear more about this program, watch [the video on YouTube](#).



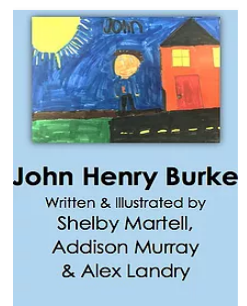
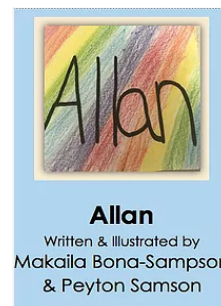
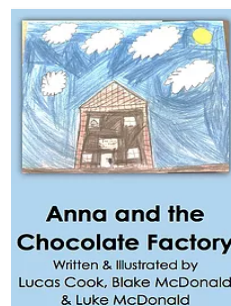
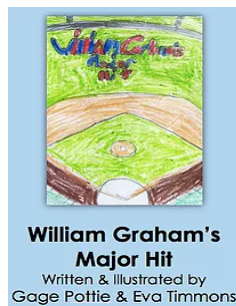


# Villa Vignettes

*"Stories shared with our seniors are treasures to be heard, nourished and celebrated."*

Storytelling is an age-old tradition around the world. It is a way for family members and communities to let older adults know that their lives are important. When people gather to create or to listen to the stories of someone's life, we are honouring their life and letting them know they matter.

Story telling is particularly helpful when older adults are facing memory challenges or dementia, because often stories of their past are still in tact. One of the most rewarding benefits of shared storytelling for seniors is the chance to connect on a deeper level over topics the senior may still find easy and comforting.



There are many ways to capture the stories of the elders in your community, stories can be gathered by sitting and chatting, using music, photos, and videos.

## VILLA VIGNETTES SHOWCASE - MAY 21, 12-1 PM



Join Richmond Education Centre/Academy students and Richmond Villa residents for a special showcase on Tuesday, May 21, 2019.

Students will present the published *Villa Vignettes* based on stories told to them by Richmond Villa residents.

Students will do readings and all books will be on display.

- TUESDAY, MAY 21
- 12-1 PM
- RICHMOND VILLA, ST. PETER'S

# Villa Vignettes

**Villa Vignettes** was an intergenerational project involving residents at a local nursing home and two schools in the community. Villa Vignettes involved three planned visits between grade 5 and 10 students and seniors to collect information to create storybooks based on the childhood memories. Following the visits, the stories were written and illustrated by the students. Grade ten students developed their leadership skills by mentoring grade five students, and together, they made connections within their community while making a difference in the lives of some seniors in the community by preserving their stories. Teachers worked in partnership with the recreation programmer at the nursing home to make arrangements for the visits and other arrangements.

The project benefited the youth by building interpersonal skills through interactions with people outside their age groups and social circles. Seniors, especially those living in long-term care, are at risk of social isolation from the larger community outside resident peers, staff, and close family members. our intention is to plant a seed our students in the hope they will continue to support these initiatives outside of the school

This project presented an opportunity for students to improve their interpersonal and literacy skills through speaking, listening and writing, but it is an example of multi-generational learning at its finest.

[Click here to read a great article on Villa Vingettes.](#)



**Too Many Kids –  
Not Enough Dolls**  
Written & Illustrated by  
Thomas Thibeau  
& Skilar Snowdon



**Marion's Life**  
Written & Illustrated by  
Vada Jane Brophy



**The Fishing Trip**  
Written & Illustrated by  
Ethan Hunt &  
Kalan Campbell



**The Christmas  
Cabin**  
Written & Illustrated by  
Owen Burns &  
Makayla Reynolds