

Briefing Note #3: The Importance of Relationships in Independent Living

CONTEXT: Kensington Village (KV) residents are aware of the importance of social involvement and relationships with others as they age. The Campus of Wellness & Care Demonstration Project (CWCDP) is working to provide opportunities for social interaction, friendships and support.

Older adults report that social interactions contribute to a positive attitude to self and others. Social interaction has been directly linked to health benefits, protective factors and decreased mortality^{1,2}. Relationships are linked to positive psychological, social, physical and mental health outcomes³.

All CWCDP programs, services and choices reflect the critical value of relationship-centred focus, which builds on positive relationships between older people, their families and communities. It extends to include the supports provided by staff in health, care and housing programs⁴. Since the beginning, staff have built relationships and trust with the independent residents of KV. This focus is making a difference.

Purpose:
To communicate data and examples that show the importance of relationships in keeping seniors active, involved and healthy.

Older Adults Need ...⁵

CWCDP & Resident Response

Resident Outcomes & Reports

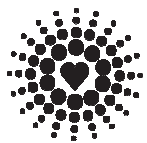
INDEPENDENT, PRODUCTIVE AND ENGAGED LIVES

As people age they become increasingly isolated and solitary. People over 90 are 3x more likely to call a support line for older adults than others⁶.



A case in point from the UK:

The Silver Line helpline for older adults in the UK receives 1400 calls/day and 85% are from new callers, meaning their targeted approach of reaching new people who might be in most need, is working.



HEALTHY AND ACTIVE LIVING

- Resident advisory committee established and supported for duration of project. Members see this as a good way to contribute to the KV Community.
- Surveys and opinions solicited, discussed and acted upon. Ideas are welcomed and respected.



- Coffee parties introduce new residents to each other, to long term residents and to the project whereby reducing isolation and building community.

- Targeted programming for at-risk populations (visual and mobility impairment, early dementia) ensures participation while reducing social isolation.

- Staff and resident encouragement to participate critical and documented.
- Evidence-based programming to support physical and mental activities.
- Group activities encourage social interaction.

- 77% affirm services have improved their ability to live independently (↑ from 62%).

CWCDP "keeps us moving & learning."

"We've learned we can be healthier and feel a lot better."

"Keeping active would help them (uninvolved residents) feel better and safer".

- 79% have an increased sense of well-being (↑ from 43%).

"Gone from being bored to being active."

- 80% state an increased connection to their neighbours (↑ from 77%).

Involvement with the broader community is encouraged...

- Parkinson's Support Group
- Three Blind Mice (CNIB)
- Health information sessions

- 88% described their social health as fair to excellent.

"People feel less isolated. They are making friends."

EVIDENCE: There are four lines: 1. Resident Health Promotion survey. 2. Residents survey. 3. KV Residents focus groups and. 4. Project administrative data. Note, '↑' indicates 'increase'.

PARTICIPATION



- Resident-led activities supported by provision of supplies, room set-up & communications.
- Celebrate success, such as the KV Walking Club destinations (California, New Orleans, New York, Hawaii & Australia) & the Golden Party for residents with high project activity attendance.
- Recognize the importance of relationship-centred focus.

Molly and Margaret have known each other for nearly 60 years. They now live down the hall from one another. On their floor, they are part of a resident's group called "The Happy Gang" that gets together monthly in an event with guest speakers, food and companionship. Every new resident is met by a 'Happy Gang' ambassador who invites them to the next get together and gives a phone list to ensure he or she quickly meets new friends on their "block."



This micro-community looks out for each other. In good times and bad, neighbours are there to offer support and a helping hand. While few have a legacy of friendship like Molly and Margaret, new and continuing friendships are made and nurtured through these connections.

SECURITY



- Residents acknowledge the importance of a receptionist at the main entrance and the presence of CWCDP project and KV staff to provide a safe, secure facility.
- Personal safety information sessions well attended.

- Resident led exercise group has been active since 2001.
 - * Class has grown from 10-15 participants to over 30 during the course of the project.
- Increasingly, residents report going for coffee or other social activities after project events and programs.
- Excellent participation in health information sessions, especially those relating to brain health and chronic diseases.

Social activities remain important at any age. Having on-site activities helps reduce barriers to accessing activities.

- * 90% report being actively involved in social activities.

- 81% report greater connection to staff (↑ from 53%).
- 86% of residents feel safe and secure.
- Presence of friendly, considerate & welcoming KV neighbours reported by survey respondents.
- Focus group evidence shows isolated, non-involved residents feel insecure in the building, whereas those involved in the project feel very safe and secure.

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¹ Alden, S. (2011) Socially active older adults have slower rates of health declines. Retrieved from <http://www.cfah.org/hbns/2011/socially-active-older-adults-have-slower-rates-of-health-declines>

² Gilmour, H. (2015). Social participation and the health and wellbeing of older adults. *Statistics Canada*. Health Report 82-003, 23 (4). Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2012004/article/11720-eng.htm>

³ Chang, P., Wray, L. & Lin, Y. (2014). Social relationships, leisure activity and health in older adults. *Health Psychology*. 33 (6) 516-523. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1533053125?accountid=166133>

⁴ My Home Life (2016). Relationship centred care. Retrieved from www.myhomelife.org.uk

⁵ Needs adapted from: Sinha, S.K., et al. *An Evidence-Informed National Seniors Strategy for Canada* (Oct. 2015) and *Active Aging: A Policy Framework in Response to the Longevity Revolution*, International Longevity Centre Brazil (July 2015).

⁶ The Silver Line Helpline (2016). Annual report and financial statements for the year ending March 2016. Retrieved from www.thesilverline.org.uk