

Aging in Community: Options for Creating Mutual Support and Cohousing [How can we build neighbourliness?]

Aging Together

Aging Together (founded in 2013 and led by Ellen Ryan) is an aging-in-community group of approximately 30 individuals residing in Hamilton. Our current ages range from late 50's to mid 80's. One member lives in a retirement home; quite a number have downsized to condo homes or seniors buildings. We are committed to learn and inform others about alternative housing options and other mutual support strategies for older adults. We are committed to get to know each other and to rely on each other in times of need.

Members of **Aging Together** have been invited to speak about social participation and aging in community by the Hamilton Council on Aging, the Hamilton Seniors Advisory Committee, Ancaster Senior Achievement Centre, Halton Seniors Advisory Committee, and various programs at McMaster University.

Aging in Community Video - 9 minutes - E.Ryan

Link: writingdownouryears.ca/resources/aging-in-community/

Village to Village Model

A non-housing approach to creating and sustaining a mutual support network within a specific geographical area. The fast-growing Village to Village Network already supports 200+ Villages across North America. The most frequent services offered by these mostly-volunteer, seniors-led villages are: information and referral, transportation and shopping, household and computer maintenance.

Senior Cohousing Model

Adapting the European approach to senior cohousing for Canada, these innovative seniors-led housing communities support optimal aging. Senior cohousing combines private home ownership with shared amenities (small private space with large common space), lower energy use, neighbourly cooperation, and an emphasis on flourishing through mutual support. Variations include subsidized units, intergenerational housing, intergenerational outreach. Most cohousing communities are located within a broader neighbourhood with easy access to services and opportunities.

Other Community-Oriented Housing Models

In **Shared Housing**, a homeowner offers accommodation to a homesharer in exchange for an agreed level of support in the form of financial exchange, assistance with household tasks, or both. Alternatives include repurposing big homes with 3-4 suites and shared common space. Some municipalities offer a matching and support service.

[See the Halton HomeShare Toolkit \(2015\).](#)

In **Co-operative Housing**, members elect a board of directors and volunteer to support the common space. In Hamilton, some co-operative housing units are subsidized for lower-income individuals. Seniors Co-housing grew out of the older and more diverse Co-op movement.

Websites

Village to Village Network	vtnetwork.org
Senior Cohousing	seniorcohousing.com
Canadian Senior Cohousing	canadianseniorcohousing.com
Second Journey	secondjourney.org
Solterra Co-housing	solterraco-housing.com/

References

- *Blanchard, J. M. (Ed.) (2013). ***Aging in Community***. Chapel Hill NC: Second Journey. See also <http://www.secondjourney.org/itin/ISSUES/AIC.htm>
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- Durrett, C. (2009). ***The Senior Cohousing Handbook: Community Approach to Independent Living***, 2nd ed. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society.
- Green, L. (2013). ***The Perfect Home for a Long Life: Choosing the Right Retirement Lifestyle for You***. Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers
- McCamant, K., & Durrett, C. (2011). ***Creating Co-housing: Building Sustainable Communities***. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.
- Pinker, S. (2014). ***The Village Effect: How Face-to-face Contact Can Make Us Healthier and Happier***. Random House Canada.
- ScottHanson, K., & ScottHanson, C. (2004). ***The Cohousing Handbook: Building A Place for Community***. Gabriola Island BC: New Society Publishers.

Selected Quotations

Perhaps ironically, while the oldest old may live alone and emphasize independence, many are only able to be autonomous because they ask for help. They, like all of us, balance dependence with independence.
~ Meika Loe

Connecting with another person is a deeply fulfilling experience.
When a group of people purposefully stretch themselves, by connecting to each other beyond the borders of selectivity and commonality, a profoundly hospitable community is created.

- a community in which belonging, contribution
and accomplishment occur regularly and naturally.

Now that's something to look forward to during one's second journey through life! ~ Emily Headley

Sitting around a table is not just a way of passing time.
It is the way the wisdom gets passed along. ~ Rachel N. Remen

Community is where humility and glory touch. ~ Henri J.M. Nouwen

We hunger for communities for meaning that can transcend
the individualism and selfishness that we see around us. ~ Michael Lerner

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much. ~ Helen Keller

It is possible that the next Buddha will not take the form of an individual.
The next Buddha may take the form of a community,
a community practicing understanding and loving kindness,
a community practicing mindful living.
This may be the most important thing we can do for the survival of the earth. ~ Thich Nhat Hahn

The fundamental quality of human beings is to be in relationship. ~ Jean Vanier

Programs currently available in and or near Hamilton supporting independent and supportive living either at home or in communal settings:

AbleLiving Hamilton

AbleLiving's Mission is to provide support that enables individuals to remain independent in their own homes. AbleLiving embraces the Independent Living Model whereby clients direct and customize the services they receive. Our clients find solutions, get involved, maximize freedom and enhance their quality of life, even if some of those decisions involve risk.

Homemaking Program: Client directed, light housekeeping services for adults living with disabilities in their own homes in Hamilton. Services Provided may include: Housekeeping, Meal Preparation, Laundry and Shopping

<http://www.ableliving.org/about-us.php>

Abbeyfield Canada

The Abbeyfield concept is very simple. Typically, up to fourteen residents of retirement age live in their own private bed-sitting rooms furnished with their own things. The residents share lunch and dinner, plus a self-serve breakfast from a well-stocked breakfast bar. Snacks and drinks are also available throughout the day. A House Coordinator attends to the daily running of the house, the shopping and the preparation and serving of meals. Privacy and independence are preserved yet the gentle supportive domestic atmosphere provides companionship and freedom from worries and chores.

<http://www.abbeyfield.ca>

Good Shepherd's Assisted Living Program for high-risk seniors

This program supports seniors who require services at a greater frequency or intensity than home care but without the medical monitoring or supervision that would be provided in a long-term care home (LTCH). The program aims to promote wellness and improve the health of clients by providing a level of services that enables them, despite their illnesses or conditions, to live in the community with a high degree of independence, and to be integrated into community life as much as possible.

The focus of assistance in the Assisted Living Program is to promote and strengthen the individual's health and social environment. We work with clients and families to find the best possible ways to maintain independent living while respecting the dignity and personal choices of the individual.

The staff is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help clients on both a scheduled and unscheduled basis.

<http://www.goodshepherdcentres.ca/assisted-living-for-seniors>

Hamilton Seniors Downsizing

Seniors moving company Hamilton serving Hamilton, Ancaster, Dundas and surrounding area Halton – Oakville, Burlington, Milton

Honoring our fathers and our mothers with superior service in senior relocation since 2005
transition specialists for seniors

We provide all the services that you need to cover all aspects of the move.

We help you downsize, sell and donate unwanted items, pack, move, unpack, design and set-up your new home, skillfully incorporating your favorite cherished personal items and furniture to create an atmosphere of comfort that is safe and familiar. Your new home is completely functional evening of the move. Our seniors moving company in Hamilton is ready to assist you with all your seniors moving needs.

Barb MacTaggart (905)769-0811

<http://www.moveseniorslovingly.com/hamilton-senior-downsizing/>

Programs currently available in and or near Hamilton supporting independent and supportive living either at home or in communal settings: *(continued)*

Older Adult Peer Connector

The Peer Connector Program empowers volunteers to provide information and referrals about community resources, support programs and services available to seniors. Volunteers assist peers in accessing the information and services in order to support day to day life and improve overall health and well-being. Offered in partnership with the Hamilton Council on Aging and Information Hamilton. Funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Time Commitment

- Training (two hours, twice a week - next session dates to be determined)
- Placement (two - four hours per week)

<http://www.hpl.ca/volunteer/older-adult-peer-connector>

YWCA Hamilton's Seniors Peer Connector Program

Volunteers age 55+ provide in-home social support and can accompany isolated seniors to attend activities and appointments in the community. If you are a senior who would like to support other seniors or know an isolated senior that would benefit from connecting with other seniors please contact: 905-522-9922 ext. 316 or shanley@ywcahamilton.org

<http://ywcahamilton.org/what-we-do/active-living-55>

Programs currently available within Hamilton Faith-based groups.

These programs typically fall under the direction of Faith Leaders such as Pastors, Imams, Rabbis and their Volunteers.

The Aging Together / Grace Lutheran website project hopes to facilitate sharing of ideas between the groups in this category.

Unitarian Universalists, Caring Companion Ministry (for Members and Adherents)

Caring Companions are available to offer support to those experiencing grief, illness, disability, relationship changes, unemployment, relocation, caregiver stress or other difficult life situations. Our Minister commissions and supports the Caring Companions to provide a confidential caring, listening presence, spiritual support and hope in times of need. This ministry is an example of our congregation's mission, "to nurture each other".

<https://uuhamilton.ca/caring-community>

Unitarian Universalists, Buddy System (not currently in use for Hamilton congregation)

The Buddy System matches up older members who live alone.

Buddies call each other on alternate days to check-in and see how the other is doing. People usually do best when they choose their own buddy, but the Team can help with matching if necessary. The Team keeps track of emergency phone numbers for buddy pairs and serves as a backup if someone is concerned about their buddy.

<http://www.uua.org/care/team/104541.shtml>