

Fight isolation by staying engaged

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Carson Sage takes Diane Jefferies and Varick Ernst on a spin on the Cycling Without Age trishaw during the North Shore Seniors' Health Expo held last year at the West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre. file photo Paul McGrath, North Shore News

As the summer winds down, it's a good time for seniors to look for things to do in the fall to keep themselves engaged in their community.

Research has shown that it is important for seniors to stay engaged as it decreases the chance of becoming isolated. Social isolation and exclusion are related to serious negative health effects and reduced quality of life for seniors.

A recent publication on social isolation of seniors, prepared for the intergovernmental Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors Forum, states: "For seniors to continue and even expand their participation in society they need to remain healthy and engaged in their communities.

However, research shows that an estimated 30 per cent of Canadian seniors are at risk of becoming socially isolated. According to the International Federation on Ageing, the No. 1 emerging issue facing seniors in Canada is keeping older people socially connected and active.”

One of the ways to become socially engaged is to attend seniors’ gatherings, workshops, expos and fairs.

These activities give seniors a chance to socialize (reducing their chance of becoming isolated) and, also to become more informed, which can have a positive effect on seniors as well.

There are several upcoming activities and events on the North Shore. For example, on Sept. 6 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the West Vancouver Seniors’ Activity Centre is running their fourth annual 2019 North Shore Seniors’ Health Expo at the West Vancouver Community Centre.

Major partners of the expo include the North Shore News, Telus (health), NexGen Hearing, McKenzie Funeral Services, the District of West Vancouver and Nurse Next Door Home Healthcare Services.

The event will kick off with a talk, Beyond the Lung: Our Evolving Understanding of Influenza’s Broader Impact on Older Adults, by Dr. Bruce Seet, director of medical affairs at Sanofi Pasteur.

The blurb in the online brochure states that: “Influenza is a serious disease which increases the risk for hospitalization and death especially among older adults.

“Overall, attendees to this session can expect to better understand the broader risks associated with seasonal influenza and how prophylactic tools such as vaccines can aid in reducing the risk.”

Other sessions include Seniors and Medical Cannabis, the Science of Happiness, Dementia Care, Sleeping Better, Scams, Enhanced Road Assessments, Myths About Seniors and Exercise, Estate Planning, Backs and Balance, Better Hearing, Cognitive Health, Home Healthcare Equipment and Tips for Healthy Brains.

Two films will be shown: The Bus Stop, which is about a multi-racial family and how they cope with dementia, and the Fit Generation about the lives of Canadians who face the challenges of aging and choose to stay fit and healthy.

Jessica Walker, event manager, says that “with the North Shore Seniors’ Health Expo now in its fourth year and still gaining momentum we are expecting our biggest turnout yet. We have more sessions this year and new exhibitors to visit.”

For an ongoing regular event featuring presentations and discussion try the Seniors Gathering held at the City of North Vancouver Library. This drop-in program for adults 55 and over, takes place on the second Tuesday of every month, from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

The September meeting features MLA Anne Kang, the parliamentary secretary for seniors and multiculturalism, who will talk with seniors about their wants and needs from the provincial government.

In October there will be meetings with the federal candidates running in the election from the Lonsdale area. The candidates will be asked to come and talk about what they can do for seniors should they be elected, plus answer questions from the seniors attending.

Many seniors' centre's host workshops geared to topics of interest and concern to seniors. For instance, in September Silver Harbour Seniors Activity Centre will be hosting Seniors workshops on: Sound Advice for the Hard of Hearing, How to Access Home Care and Foot and Ankle Arthritis. If you attend a Keep Well class on the North Shore, you can usually hear an interesting talk about seniors' issues.

A way you could track down information about workshops is to obtain a copy of the 2019 Seniors Resource Guide compiled by North Shore Community Resources Society. The guide gives an overview of community services in several areas including housing, information, legal resources, social, education and recreation programs. By checking the section on Seniors Programs and Social, Education Recreation Programs you'll find resources about how to find information on special workshops and events. The Seniors Resource Guide (2019) can be found at community and seniors centres or by calling North Shore Community Resources Society at 604-982-3302.

If you want to stay involved in your community, get out there and attend an event.