



North Shore News Column.

Older & Wiser

By Tom Carney

Local survey results are in

By Tom Carney, Special to North Shore News February 5, 2012



Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society's Jane Osborne and Tom Carney review the results of a recent survey focused on meeting the needs of North Shore seniors.

Photograph by: NEWS photo, Mike Wakefield

TWELVE hundred and then some!

That's how many seniors filled out the seniors survey that blanketed the North Shore last fall. You may have filled out a survey yourself or known someone who did. Titled Seniors Today - Building a Better Tomorrow, the survey was sponsored by the Lionsview Seniors' Planning Society.

An extensive network of volunteers worked with seniors to help them fill out the survey or complete it online. The survey was based on an approach used by the World Health Organization to gather input on what seniors need to remain healthy, happy, independent and connected to each other in the community.

More than half of the survey respondents were female, a little more than two-thirds of respondents were in the age demographic 65-84 years of age, and while returns came in from all three North Shore municipalities, the survey proved to be most popular with residents in the District of North Vancouver.

So what did seniors have to say? Well, overall seniors on the North Shore are a pretty happy bunch. More than 94 per cent of the survey respondents said they like living on the North Shore and want to remain here. But with almost half of seniors living alone and with a limited number of housing choices available to them, many will be challenged to do so.

Seniors are generally satisfied with the affordability and availability of transportation on the North Shore and with our outdoor spaces and public buildings. Most of the respondents have a fairly strong support network of family and friends and felt fairly informed about community events.

Surprises? There were several. Almost half of the seniors surveyed don't know much or anything at all about Fair PharmaCare. Approximately three in 10 seniors surveyed have trouble paying their bills, four in 10 feel they do not socialize enough and less than two in 10 feel there is a very good awareness of seniors' needs.

What are the areas that need attention? More housing options, affordable housing, parking spaces, accessibility elements in public buildings, public safety and the lack of public toilets stand out. Loss of independence and declining health tops the list of worries for seniors. At the very bottom of the worry list: Death.

Now to quote one senior, this survey isn't worth, "A hill of beans," unless we do something with the data. We couldn't agree more. The Lionsview survey team is hosting a series of community workshops with seniors to share the results of the survey, solicit feedback and develop an action plan to address the issues identified in the survey.

We have conducted three workshops to date - one in each of the three North Shore municipalities. Four more afternoon workshops are scheduled between Feb. 6 and 17.

In March and April we will be meeting with service providers to gather their feedback on the issues raised in the survey. And, in June, Lionsview will produce a final report summarizing the process and outcomes and present recommendations for age-friendly initiatives to be implemented in 2013.

How do we turn what we learned from the survey into an age-friendly action plan?

One idea that is proving to be popular is to develop a series of neighbourhood-based Seniors Action Tables (SATs). The SATs would involve seniors or groups of seniors in local service planning. It's one of several interesting ideas to come out of the workshops but it's really up to seniors in the community to decide the next steps. Whatever action is taken, we need to ensure that seniors' voices drive future action. Lionsview can't do this alone. We are currently looking for seniors and groups of seniors to take a leadership role in developing age-friendly initiatives and projects to respond to the issues identified in the survey. If you want to get involved or learn more, give us a call.

The survey results, in English and Farsi, as well as full details on the upcoming community workshops, are posted on the Lionsview website, at www.lionsviewseniorsplanning.com. You can get more information and register for one of the upcoming workshops by calling Margaret Coates, at 604-985-2324.

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