



# AGE FRIENDLY Manitoba

Communities committed to healthy, active aging

**Mission: To facilitate healthy aging by providing leadership and encouraging collaboration in creating age-friendly places (communities) that optimize the ability of all older Manitobans to do the things they feel are important.**

## MOVING TRANSPORTATION FORWARD FOR OLDER ADULTS IN MANITOBA

Transportation as one of the eight pillars of an Age Friendly community remains an important topic of concern for older adults aging in place across Manitoba. Many accessible transportation groups understand and identify with the challenges in providing transportation services in rural communities among which are high costs in user fees, increasing costs in vehicle maintenance, unchanging funding subsidization and scarce fund-raising opportunities.

Since amalgamation of Siglunes and Eriksdale which is now the R.M of Westinterlake, the need to change and adapt their handi-van services was only amplified given the challenges with the one new municipality trying to fund two separate transportation programs. On January 8, 2020, reeves, councillors, board members and community members from surrounding communities came together to host their very first regional accessible transportation meeting to review the possibility of regionalizing their handi-van services.

The Westinterlake handi-van group found that since the unique vast landscapes and distances it was more important than ever to look at regionalization with a geographic lens. It only stands to prove that services will be safer, more efficient and costs could significantly be reduced if communities combine services wherever possible. Bringing a variety of stakeholders together to discuss the issues related to the handi-vans was

essential to moving forward and creating a plan. Everyone needs to be heard with regards to making decisions that affect the mobility and independence of the aging population. With a regional focus, there are opportunities to improve accessible transportation services in the region and the Province. This approach could include the creation of standardized online driver resources and training, gps and vehicle communication systems and some type of central booking which would make it much easier for rural Manitobans to move around. The R.M of Westinterlake, along with the RM of Grahamdale are great examples of Age Friendly communities who have taken it upon themselves to recognize the challenges that impact their older adult population and have started to make small step in finding solutions. The most important highlighted success is that a variety of stakeholders came together as a collective community to combine resources and find effective solutions together. This in, and of, itself is a crucial step towards helping Manitoba become more Age Friendly.

*Article written by Samantha Rodeck, Executive Director, Transportation Option Network for Seniors*

*Information & Support provided by: Gary Anderson - Chair, Lake Shore Handi-van Inc., Keith Lundale - Board Member & Volunteer Van Driver*

## Research Project on the Impact and Sustainability of Age-Friendly Community Initiatives in Manitoba

*By Verena Menec, University of Manitoba*

Between late July and early November, I had the pleasure to interview 59 people from 52 municipalities about what's been with their age-friendly initiative. I want to take this opportunity to thank everybody for participating in the study!

The pride of the participants in our study about their communities, and the commitment to make them the best place to live in for older adults and the community as a whole, was evident in the interviews, even in municipalities

where the age-friendly initiative was no longer active. A faded age-friendly initiative does not mean there is no focus on older adults.

There are many excellent services and supports for older adults available in communities, and Senior Resource Coordinators play a key role in this. This is not to say that there are no major challenges; affordable and suitable

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**

transportation and housing for older adults are major challenges in many communities.

Not surprisingly, a lot has changed in the province and in communities in the last decade. The population in Manitoba, as is the case in Canada as a whole, has been aging. In 2006, 14.1 percent of the population was 65 years or older in Manitoba; in 2016, it was 15.6 percent. But not all municipalities have experienced an aging population; some

have become younger, and some have stayed the same. An aging population has spurred on some municipalities to focus more on older adults. But in some municipalities that had become younger, it was more difficult to keep the age-friendly initiative going.

My colleagues and I hope to be able to visit communities once the Covid restrictions ease. I hope to meet many of the people I interviewed in person when we pass through!



## COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT: RM OF HARRISON PARK

Recently, MASC undertook to develop six short videos themed; "Community Living: Ageing Well". One video features the "Elders Dance", an intergenerational activity within the RM of Harrison Park, in the community of Onanole.

Looking to be more inclusive of older adults in the community, Pam Ryzner, the principal of Onanole Elementary School, investigated several possible activities, from learning to bake, developing computer technology events, to engaging in garage sales etc. In the end, the idea of an Elders Dance was born.

Working within the community, the concept involves older adults coming into the school on a scheduled basis to teach students old fashioned dances; the waltz, the fox trot, the schottische.

In the spring, students help organize the highlight of the year, the "Elder's Dance". They do all the planning including decorating, soliciting local businesses for donations of food and other supports. Local musicians are recruited to play at the event. All participants dress up for the occasion. Students learn how to request a dance with an older adult, accompany the partner to the dance floor and return the partner back to their seats after the dance.

Nine years later, the outcomes have been amazing. Socially, the older adults are getting out to teaching events, as well as being the focus of the final dance.

The youth have learned how to work together to plan events. The older adults have commented that it has been great fun to get to know the youth and to interact with them when they are out and about in the town itself. The students have made comments such as "older people are not so scary after all." They have learned the principles of respect, and inclusion. As one student says, "Many of us do not have grandparents. The "elders" are great to learn from, to hear their stories". Older adults likewise comment that these students are like "adopted" grandchildren.

Mary Nichols, Seniors Coordinator in Onanole says, "It is about respect, it is about building relationship, not just in the Elders dance but within the Community as a whole."

As the principal, Pam Ryzner has said, "When we started this activity, we had no idea of the wide-ranging, positive impact, the Elder's Dance would have both in the school and in the community."



### Team Member HIGHLIGHT



### SAMANTHA RODECK

Samantha Rodeck is the Executive Director for TONS, Transportation Options Network for Seniors which is a Provincial not for profit organization. Samantha was born and raised in Rural Manitoba and currently lives in Ile Des Chenes Manitoba which is a small community south of Winnipeg. TONS believes that a wide range of transportation options that support the needs of Older Adults throughout the course of

their life is a key component in creating an Age Friendly community and it essential to ensuring Older Adults remain active and independent within their communities. Ensuring the availability of transportation is everyone's responsibility, so we can give older adults the quality of life they deserve.



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