



# 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.

## IT'S ABOUT BECOMING MORE AGE — FRIENDLY

Much attention has been paid over the past few months to the question of how one might distinguish an age-friendly community from one that isn't. For starters, it is so, so important to appreciate that every community is age-friendly. Large, small, urban or rural, every community has resources that support people of all ages, to do the things they need and want to do, when they need and want to do them. One must also accept the fact that each of these communities also presents barriers that limit the opportunities to do those same things.

Currently in Manitoba, 92 communities have joined the Age Friendly Manitoba Initiative, which started in 2008. A defining characteristic of these communities that have embarked on the journey of becoming MORE age-friendly, is that the community has initiated a dialogue, a discussion, of both the resources and the barriers present in their community. From that dialogue, many communities have created a vision and ultimately a plan, to enhance the resources and minimize the barriers.

In those communities there is a recognition that success is a shared responsibility. Neither the municipal council, nor the senior centre, nor the seniors resource coordinator, have in their job description, the sole responsibility of making their community more age-

friendly. Each is a player and so are the business community, local schools, police, recreation and importantly, older residents themselves, who bring wisdom and experience to the dialogue.

What other characteristics might one look for in communities on the journey to becoming more age-friendly? Certainly, the municipal government shares in the vision and brings resources to support efforts. Community leaders and key people are engaged and are a part of the dialogue. There is typically a champion or a leadership group that is helping to translate the dialogue into action. Community connections bring collaboration, partnerships and intergenerational solidarity. Key words come to mind... safety, sense of belonging, social participation, access and inclusion, affordability and certainly a stronger sense of community pride. Look no further than those communities that have erected "welcome to our age-friendly community" signs.

There are eight domains in the age-friendly model. Important attributes that include transportation, housing, social connection and information. Each will benefit from enhanced resources and/or from minimizing barriers. Opportunities for good things to happen will emerge once the dialogue starts.

## MASC: A Commitment to Collaboration

BY TOM FARRELL, PRESIDENT  
MANITOBA ASSOCIATION OF SENIOR CENTRES (MASC)

I am pleased to take this opportunity to share information about us and our commitment to our Mission statement above. With 60 member organizations and over 90 age-friendly communities across Manitoba, our day-to-day work is driven by our commitment to provide leadership and encourage collaboration, in creating a network of communities committed to healthy, active aging.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

With funding from Manitoba Health, we have extended our reach and have developed new resources to support our shared interests. This, just the sixth edition of our **AGEFRIENDLY** newsletter, is one example of our efforts. If you have not already taken a look, do visit the new website at <https://agefriendlymanitoba.com>. It offers a wealth of information and resources on all things age-friendly.

You know that your work, and we know that our work, will be successful with collaboration. We need to share resources and we need to learn from each other's experiences. When I think about the challenges of collaborative effort, I cannot help but think of the complexities faced by the World Health Organization (WHO) in its recent work of creating a new global vision for healthy aging and setting the world on track for its *Decade of Healthy Ageing*. MASC continues to benefit from the WHO's vision, in our efforts to collaborate with others.

Recently we expressed our appreciation to the President of the Manitoba Association of Municipalities for the organization's continued interest in supporting age-friendly community development. We have also

contributed an article for their Spring newsletter. In a new collaboration, we have shared information with the Manitoba Municipal Administrators Association, which led to a webinar for their members in January. That session outlined the many benefits of becoming a more age-friendly community and shared information on the many resources we have available to support community interests.

We look forward to continued collaboration with both municipal associations. The common denominator between both is, of course, our individual communities. We have recently written to the Mayors and Reeves of the age-friendly communities, thanking them for their efforts and outlining the resources available to them. One such resource is the capacity of the Age Friendly Resource Team. Each community has been assigned one of the Team members, who will connect with their respective communities and be available for consultations and information sharing.

We welcome your thoughts and are always pleased to hear from you. Contact information is noted at the end of the newsletter.



## AF MANITOBA INITIATIVE: RM OF PINEY

RM of Piney is located in the very South East corner of the province, approximately 175km from Winnipeg. It is a large area municipality, with a population of just over 1700, and is spread out in 13 small hamlets within the municipality. It's a beautiful area filled with nature, agriculture, and a higher than average population of older adults. According to Stats Canada 44% of the population is over the age of 55 years.

Older adults that reside in this area are independent, and very resourceful. They enjoy the outdoors, rural small town living, and being active within the community.

The Age Friendly Manitoba consultants completed a survey and community consultation in the spring of 2018. The initiative had great community participation and seniors were able to voice their opinions about what they would like to see in the municipality.

The report provided at the end of the session, was distributed, presented and one initial meeting was held. Like other communities, the Age-Friendly grant was used to purchase some nice permanent benches in the communities to have a place to rest when walking in our small towns.

What we did not know at the time, would be, that this document is much more valuable than the words on paper it provided. The report was a connection point or the foundation piece between the local government and seniors within the municipality. This document is now referenced time and time again for many projects taken on by the municipality. Since publication, it has been used to support planning documents and applications for funding to make future plans for all residents in the RM of Piney.

Transportation is a challenge in the rural area. Older



adults are reliant on family, friends, and volunteer drivers. There is no public transportation, handivans, or taxis available. Hiring a volunteer driver is still very costly, and a trip to see a specialist in Winnipeg will cost at minimum \$150. This past year during Covid-19 we were fortunate to acquire some federal dollars to help subsidize transportation to access medical appointments, chemotherapy treatments, surgeries and Covid testing to name a few. Funding covered the volunteer driver's mileage. A total of just over 14000 km was covered between the months of September to March. We recently found out that Services for Seniors was successful in acquiring some more funds

to help subsidize medical appointments, thanks to New Horizons and Kinsmen Winnipeg Bingo for the upcoming year.

The Municipality was also successful with provincial grants and is currently working with a consultant and the public for a plan that focuses on public transportation and trails. The stats from the subsidized funding will be used to reinforce the need with the plan. What future transportation will look like in our municipality is unknown at this point. But we are excited to see the outcomes, as more pieces are added to providing a strong foundation to keep our older adults healthy, safe, and able to continue living independently at home.

Team Member  
**HIGHLIGHT**

**DON FLETCHER**

Don Fletcher living in Wildwood Park, Winnipeg is the retired CEO of the Reh Fit Center. He has been an AF Resource Team member for 12 years. A long time advocate of health and well being Don views the AF Initiative as a wonderful concept to utilize community resource development principles to enhance the foundation for healthier, happier lives for all people to age in the place of their choice. Community connection, building community wellness are not just words, they are aspects of local culture that enhance a higher, more robust quality of life for everyone



**CONTACT OUR CONSULTANTS**

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