

MOVE TO BE STRONG!



VON SMART NEWSLETTER



JULY 2024

WELCOME TO SUMMER!

It's officially summertime in Erie St. Clair! This means more time outside enjoying the sunshine and warm weather. Warmer weather can lift moods, inspire creativity, and be the perfect time to start something new. Summer is also a great time to get active, move your body and find a form of physical activity that fits into your daily routine.

As we move our bodies through the summer it is important that you remember to stay hydrated and drink an adequate amount of water (8 cups per day for adults as per Health Canada guidelines). Summer is also an excellent time to get out and explore your community, whether it's going for a nature walk, attending a festival, exploring your local farmer's market, trying a new restaurant, or supporting a local small business – get out there and discover your community!

Events around Erie St. Clair:

- **Friday, July 5, 2024** – Taste of Sarnia, 5pm-8pm, 169 Christina St. N., **Sarnia, ON**
- **Friday, July 19, 2024** – Free Summer Concerts: Windsor Symphony Orchestra, 7pm-8pm, Windsor Sculpture Garden, **Windsor, ON**
- **Sunday, July 21, 2024** – Merlin Legion Classic Car, Motorcycle & Antique Tractor Show, 10a-3pm, 2 Stanley St., **Chatham, ON**

The VON SMART Program

Helping to keep our community dwelling older adults active, engaged and free from falls!

For more information about SMART exercise classes and fall prevention workshops please contact:

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-or-

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FROM COHABITATION TO COHOUSING: OLDER BABY BOOMERS CREATE LIVING ARRANGEMENTS TO SUIT NEW NEEDS

By Nancy P. Kropf, Dean, Perimeter College and Professor, Social Work, Georgia State University and Sherry Cummings, Associate Dean and Professor of Social Work, University of Tennessee

One of the major questions of growing older is, “where do I want to live as I age?” For many baby boomers, an important goal is staying independent as long as possible. Many in this generation desire to age in their homes and make their own choices. Living preferences are changing, as are relationship patterns, such as greater numbers of mid- and late-life adults who are single, childless, or live at a distance from adult children. “Senior cohousing communities,” or SCCs, are a form of communal living that integrates common areas and private residences. They promote choice and independence, which are particularly important for the aging baby boom generation.

Shared Values, Shared Lifestyles

Cohousing is a relatively new type of living arrangement. The first modern cohousing community was developed in Denmark in 1972. In the U.S., senior cohousing, started in the early 2000s. There are now 17 such communities, and 28 are currently in formation or under construction.

Cohousing communities bring people together who choose to live cooperatively based upon shared values. Examples are the desire to promote environmental sustainability or social justice, or a shared spirituality. Common elements include a community vision statement that articulates important principles along with a hierarchical governance and decision-making structure. Residents live in individual homes but share some spaces, such a common building with a kitchen, library and exercise room. Patios and gardens are positioned in a way to promote interaction. As a result, residents engage in communal meals and other activities.

These new arrangements differ from traditional over-55 residential communities, which are planned and managed by a developer. These places are often large and provide organized activities for those who live there. SCCs, however, are typically small and are planned, developed and operated by the residents themselves. The whole idea is to promote community, social engagement and active aging.

Life in a Shared Community

To experience life in the shared living communities, we visited 12 of them in six states and interviewed 76 people during the summer and fall of 2018. The smallest included 10 individual homes, while the largest consisted of 41 condo units. Some communities were in rural areas, while others were in cities.

The communities were quite different. Some had individual housing units, while others were condominiums. All had a common house with a kitchen area and spaces for meetings and socializing, and some had elevators to accommodate those who couldn't manage stairs. Many had a guest room, where prospective residents could stay for a few nights. Several themes emerged from our interviews and conversations with the residents.

A major reason that people choose to move to a shared housing community is social engagement. This is a critical issue since 1 in 3 people over age 45 are lonely. Being part of a community that offers mutual support has a positive impact on health status, connection and quality of life during later years.

The residents we interviewed reported that they enjoy the common activities, such as shared meals, parties and discussion groups, along with the opportunity for spontaneous interactions. Caring relationships develop among the residents, and many described the support received after major events such as a hospitalization or significant loss, and also for smaller tasks such as a ride to the airport or pet sitting. In addition, being a source of assistance was important and engendered feelings of being worthwhile and needed. However, those interviewed were also clear that there is a difference between offering assistance and being a caregiver for others, which was not a role that people expected within the shared communities.

There were many norms around interactions to manage the public-private spaces. In one community, sitting on the front porch meant that you were available for conversation. If you sat on your back porch, however, others did not bother you. The opportunity to have close relationships with others, but also have individual space, is an important element of SCCs.

Living and Learning

From our time at the shared communities, it was clear that living in a shared governance, communal housing arrangement provided opportunities for growth. People described being more patient, open to new learning, having vitality and valuing multiple perspectives. These experiences are consistent with the gerotranscendence theory of aging. This theory suggests that as a person grows older, it is possible to “transcend” or move beyond previous understandings and gain new perspectives on fundamental existential issues, the meaning and importance of relationships, and definitions of self.

This type of community is not for everyone, though. Although some shared community units are moderately priced, with a one-bedroom home for under \$100,000, many are very costly, with some well over a half a million dollars. Also, a person must be willing to work, as the shared areas require maintenance. And, residents are expected to serve on governance committees. Like all living arrangements, these communities have their promoters and detractors. But for those who value community and may be interested, current senior cohousers recommend that you don't hesitate – do your research, and go visit one for a few days.

Source:

Kropf, N. P. & Cummings, S. (2024, June 10). *From cohabitation to cohousing: Older baby boomers create living arrangements to suit new needs*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/from-cohabitation-to-cohousing-older-baby-boomers-create-living-arrangements-to-suit-new-needs-121592>

ANIMAL FLOW: GROUND BASED EXERCISE

Animal Flow (AF) includes a range of movements and combinations that are grouped into six categories which include: wrist mobilizations, activations (isometric holds), form specific stretches, travelling forms, switches and transitions, and flows.

Research points to AF improving brain function, proprioception and core muscle activation.

In June, two members of the SMART Team attended a workshop to learn the Level I movements of AF. Ground-based exercise for older adults is gaining in popularity as it focuses on the functional movements necessary to get up from and down to the ground with greater ease.



AF: Beast



AF: Side Kickthrough



AF: Crab

WHAT IS ON YOUR SUMMER WISHLIST?

Are there places you want to visit?

Festivals or events you want to attend?

Friends or family you want to connect with?

MEET OUR NEWEST FITNESS INSTRUCTOR JULIA GREEN



Hello! I am recent graduate of the Recreation Therapy Program at Lambton College and before that, a graduate of the Fitness and Health Promotion Program at Fanshawe College.

I have experience working in a retirement home setting as well as facilitating fitness classes with seniors through The Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging. I am committed to my own fitness and well-being and am excited to share that excitement with the clients in the VON SMART Program.

When I am not at work I can be found at the gym, camping, hiking a trail somewhere, baking cookies or reading a book.



MOBILITY MATTERS

Throughout the month of June, VON SMART exercise participants across Erie St. Clair completed their Mobility Matters Checkups.

What is it?

Routine functional exercise tests that evaluate mobility, balance, leg strength and endurance against normative values for age/gender. The checkup helps us identify possible fall risk factors and areas of focus for exercise routines. Tracking outcomes allows participants to celebrate progress from one checkup to the next.

Who is participating?

Residents in retirement homes and other community members across Erie St. Clair.

What is involved?

Three functional exercise tests:

- 1) 30-Second Chair Stand
- 2) Floor Transfer Test (community members) OR Timed Up and Go (TUG) Test (retirement homes)
- 3) 4-Stage Balance Test

Why participate?

Like annual medication reviews, a person's mobility should be assessed on a regular basis to identify any possible areas of concern and to offer opportunities and interventions to support ageing well and independence.

Interested in a checkup?

Give us a call and we can work to get your checkup completed.



A participant from a SMART community exercise class in Ridgeway completes a balance test with SMART Team members.

SUMMER SAFETY TIPS

- Be mindful of your footwear choices: wearing open-toed shoes or flip-flops can be a fall risk
 - o Snug fitting shoes are much better
- Loose fitting clothing can help you stay cool in the summer
- Wet or uneven surfaces can create fall hazards (e.g. a wet pool deck may become slippery, uneven sidewalks can be a trip hazard)
- Consider using sunscreen, sunglasses and sunhats when you are outdoors to protect you from the sun
- Dehydration can have a negative impact on organs, leading to kidney stones, constipation, and liver, joint, and muscle damage



DID YOU KNOW?

As we age our sense of thirst decreases.

Tip: Carry a water bottle everywhere you go.



REMINDER

NO CLASSES
AUGUST 5, 2024

DUE TO THE CIVIC HOLIDAY