

# MOVE TO BE STRONG!



## VON SMART NEWSLETTER



JUNE 2024

### HAPPY SENIORS MONTH!

For many years, June has been widely recognized as Seniors Month in Ontario however, with the introduction of Bill 70, Seniors Month Act, in February 2023, Ontario moves to become the first province to officially declare June as Seniors Month. Bill 70 currently sits in the hands of the Standing Committee on Social Policy. The Act aims to encourage continuous engagement and inclusion for seniors while also promoting age-friendly communities and mental health initiatives.

June is a month to celebrate and recognize that seniors are active members of our community with stories and wisdom to share. Seniors make daily, meaningful contributions and impacts through volunteerism and being leaders in their communities.

Supporting longevity and building resilience in seniors should be a focus for today's society. Age is simply a number and it is important that seniors are given the autonomy to make decisions about their lives for as long as they can. Seniors can do anything they want to and should be encouraged to try new things whenever possible. Go try something new today!



#### 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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# BLUE ZONES: LESSONS FROM THE WORLD'S LONGEST LIVED

By Dan Buettner, BA, and Sam Skemp, BA

**Abstract:** What began as a National Geographic expedition, led by Dan Buettner, to uncover the secrets of longevity, evolved into the discovery of the 5 places around the world where people consistently live over 100 years old, dubbed the Blue Zones. Dan and his team of demographers, scientists and anthropologists were able to distill the evidence-based common denominators of these Blue Zones into 9 commonalities that they call the Power 9. They have since taken these principles into communities across the United States working with policy makers, local businesses, schools and individuals to shape the environments of the Blue Zones Project Communities. What has been found is that putting the responsibility of curating a healthy environment on an individual does not work, but through policy and environmental changes the Blue Zones Project Communities have been able to increase life expectancy, reduce obesity and make the healthy choice the easy choice for millions of Americans.

## Power 9

1. *Move naturally* – moving within the natural environment around you; not using mechanical conveniences
2. *Purpose* – “why I wake up in the morning”; knowing your sense of purpose can add 7 years onto your life
3. *Downshift* – build purposeful moments into each day to shed stress
4. *80% rule* – stop eating when your stomach is 80% full, the 20% gap could account for weight loss vs. gain
5. *Plant slant* – beans including fava, black, soy, and lentils are what make up the majority of centenarian diets
6. *Wine at 5* – drinking alcohol moderately and regularly with friends and/or food
7. *Belong* – being part of a group (e.g. faith-based community) can add 4-14 years onto your life expectancy
8. *Loved ones first* – keeping aging family members close; committing to a life partner; invest in their children
9. *Right tribe* – create a social circle that you can rely on; social networks help shape healthy behaviours

## Sources:

Buettner, D. (2005, November). National Geographic the secrets of a long life. The Secrets of Long Life. [https://www.bluezones.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Nat\\_Geo\\_LongevityF.pdf](https://www.bluezones.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Nat_Geo_LongevityF.pdf)  
Buettner, D., & Skemp, S. (2016, July 7). Blue zones: Lessons from the world's longest lived. American journal of lifestyle medicine. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6125071/>

## VON SMART TEAM TRAIN THE TRAINER: APRIL 2024

Approximately every four months, the VON SMART Team members from across Erie St. Clair come together for a day of instruction, problem solving, team building and to learn from one another. In April, the SMART Team was joined by Val Shah, creator and founder of DRÖM (drumming and fitness), who lead the team through a DRÖM practice as well as some team building exercises. Val emphasized the importance of play, especially as we age. The team had a great time moving their bodies, laughing and giving themselves **permission to play** – give it a try!



**VON SMART Team with Val Shah from DRÖM.**

Back Row: Susan M., Scott D., Megan V., Val S. (DRÖM), Peggy G., Dianne W., Susan B., Marilyn T., Nancy V. & Donna W.  
Front Row: Katie E., Melissa B., Khrista B., Bob B., Anne C., Rosemary S. & Chalaine A.



VON SMART Team members attempt a team building exercise together.

## REFLECTION

Let's reflect on the **Blue Zones** and the nine attributes that are common between them. How can you incorporate some of these into your daily life? Take some time to fill in the spaces below with your thoughts and intentions moving forward.

Consider this: How do you want to live the next years of your life?

**Purpose:** Why do you wake up in the morning?

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**Downshift:** What do you do to relieve stress?

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**Plant Slant:** What is your favourite plant-based meal?

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**Right Tribe:** Who is in your 'tribe'?

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## THE BLUE ZONES



## MEET OUR NEWEST PROGRAM COORDINATOR ERICA DEMARTINIS



Hello! My name is Erica Demartinis and I am thrilled to be joining the Erie St. Clair SMART team! I was born and raised in Chatham Kent, Ontario, and I recently graduated from Western University with a degree in kinesiology. During my final year at university, I had the opportunity to work with London's VON SMART team as a placement student, where I was able to gain insight into the workings of the office as well as lead fitness classes within the community. This was a transformative experience for me as it broadened my understanding of healthy aging and ultimately lead me to pursue a role with the Chatham SMART team. Since 2022, I've served as one of the co-coordinators for the HARK kids after-school program with Investing in Children. In this role, I organized weekly physical activities, offered nutritious snacks, and lead mindful activities with children in low-income areas around London. On top of this, I recently volunteered at a physical therapy clinic, where I was able to work alongside a physical therapist to administer hands-on therapy treatment modalities and patient-specific exercise plans. Outside of my professional endeavours, I love to be outdoors and stay active. I enjoy playing soccer, running, and getting to the gym as often as I can. I am truly excited to bring my passion and skills to the Erie St. Clair SMART team, and I can't wait to make a positive impact within the Chatham Kent community.



## THE DIGNITY OF RISK

The process of aging is experienced by every human being in their lifetime. As people age, oftentimes their abilities are called into question and they can be made to feel as though they are incapable of completing tasks that they have always performed. Stereotypes that are frequently placed on older adults, typically stem from misguided good intentions that are meant to keep the individual safe from harm. As an example, older adults can be rightly or wrongly labeled as frail and have decisions taken away from them in the interest of their wellbeing. This may include something as routine as going to the store for their own groceries, or as exciting as climbing a mountain in a national park. Whatever the setting, the possible risks associated with certain activities, can leave those around an older adult feeling nervous for their safety and ultimately not allow the older adult to participate – taking away their choice. But is it that decision really theirs to make?

The idea of risk taking as it relates to older adults and individuals with disabilities was first explored in 1960 by Bengt Nirje, a Swedish physician, who said “To be allowed to be human means to be allowed to fail... To deny someone the opportunity to make mistakes is to violate their right to make decisions about their own lives.” In 1972, the term “Dignity of Risk” was first introduced by Robert Perske who said “Overprotection can keep people from becoming all they could become. Many of our best achievements came the hard way: we took risks, fell flat, suffered, picked ourselves up, and tried again...we were given the chance to try.”

When we consider falls and risk, we are reminded that most falls are preventable because the risk factors are treatable. In this same way, Dr. Stephen Robinovitch, from Simon Fraser University, a leader in the field of fall prevention, asks you to contemplate the following:

### Think about your most recent fall.

1. Was the fall caused by unreasonable risk-taking, or reckless decision?
2. Would a reasonable person have tried to prevent, or alter the way you performed the activity that lead to the fall?
3. Would you be okay with needing someone’s approval to perform the activity that lead to the fall?

Certain risks are all around us in our daily lives, it is up to each individual, regardless of age, to accept and navigate them accordingly to live a fulfilled life.

Robinovitch, PhD, S. (2023, October 5). The dignity of risk and falls in older adults (dr. Stephen Robinovitch). YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvwXbHbRwQ0&ab\\_channel=FallPreventionCommunityofPractice](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uvwXbHbRwQ0&ab_channel=FallPreventionCommunityofPractice)

## WALKING WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS: MAY 2024



Pausing the walk to watch the turtles sunbathe at Ojibway Nature Centre on May 8<sup>th</sup>.



Multigenerational SMART walkers enjoying the sights and sounds of nature along the Ganatchio Trail on May 15<sup>th</sup>.



SMART walkers in Sarnia enjoying the sunshine at Centennial Park on May 22<sup>nd</sup>.