

# MOVE TO BE STRONG!



## VON SMART NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2024



### WHERE DID SUMMER GO?

We must have blinked; summer is gone and school has started again for the children of Erie St. Clair. The changing seasons invite us to pause and reflect on what each season has to offer. The changing seasons reminds us that everything has a time, place and purpose and that there is always an opportunity for growth. Although seasons change, exercise should remain a constant throughout the whole year. We may have to adjust our exercise style and routines as the weather changes but the importance of ongoing exercise remains ever present.

Additionally, before the fall equinox arrives on September 22<sup>nd</sup> and ushers in vibrant colour changes and crisp air, we suggest taking this time to look around your home to see if there are any remaining projects that need to be completed before the colder days arrive. It is also a good idea to complete a quick assessment of your living spaces focussing on clearing pathways, ensuring handrails are installed correctly, checking that indoor and outdoor lightbulbs are working, and changing the batteries in your smoke alarm. By ensuring your living space is ready for the changing seasons, you can optimize your environment and help lower environmental fall risk factors. Let's get ready for the changing seasons together.

#### 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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# ADDRESSING YOUR ENVIRONMENT FOR FALLS PREVENTION

Jun 5, 2024 - McMaster University

Outside of falling in love or things falling into place, falling is something we want to avoid, especially as we age. The stats speak for themselves: each year, more than 37 million falls result in the need for medical attention and over 680 thousand people die from falling around the globe (1).

In Canada, most older adults – over 92% – live in the community, meaning in a private dwelling or a residence specifically for older adults like a retirement community (2). Outside of their age, older adults living in the community face various risks that increase their chances of experiencing a fall. These include having a previous history of falls, living with one or more chronic diseases, sensory issues, limited mobility, taking certain medications, engaging in unsafe behaviours like rushing, and environmental factors (3-7).

One of the biggest culprits is environmental factors, causing anywhere between 30% to 50% of falls. These include things like inadequate lighting, steps, and uneven, slippery, or cluttered walking surfaces (3-5;8-10). Given the sizable role that these environmental factors play in increasing the risk of falls, let's zero in on whether programs that aim to tackle these environmental factors are effective in reducing falls for older adults living in the community with this recent systematic review (3).

## What Research Tells Us:

Within the review, environmental programs included:

1. fall hazard assessments that provided suggestions to modify or adapt the environment,
2. assistive technologies or devices (e.g., vision assessments and glasses, custom orthosis/braces, insoles, 'over-shoe' anti-slip devices, automatic nightlights, meal delivery),
3. education around fall hazards and a self-home audit, and
4. permanent modifications to the physical characteristics of the home to increase the ability to perform daily activities independently.

Starting with the good news! Programs that removed fall-hazards from the home decreased the number of falls experienced by 38% and the number of fallers. What's more, this was based on high-certainty evidence, meaning we can be confident in the findings. That said, these benefits were only seen for older adults living in the community who were at high risk of falling. This includes older adults who are unable to perform daily activities independently – such as bathing, eating, and getting dressed, those who have recently been admitted to a hospital, and those who have fallen in the past 12 months.

The results also showed that uncertainties remain around whether assistive technologies and education can reduce the number of falls; more high-quality research is needed. Additionally, no comment on the effectiveness of home modifications aiming to decrease falls by increasing the ability to perform daily activities independently can be made at this time, as no completed studies evaluating this were found.

**Source:** <https://www.mcmasteroptimalaging.org/blog/detail/blog/2024/06/05/addressing-your-environment-for-falls-prevention>



**SAVE THE DATE!**

**VON SMART'S 30<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

**OCTOBER 17, 2024 AT 10:30AM**

**JOIN US FOR AN EXERCISE CLASS 'WITH' ALL OF THE OTHER  
SMART PROGRAMS & PARTICIPANTS ACROSS  
ONTARIO & NOVA SCOTIA!**

**DETAILS TO FOLLOW**

## DID YOU KNOW?

VON SMART offers free **WEEKLY** Virtual Exercise Classes that you can join from the comfort of your own home! Virtual classes are a great way to keep exercise in your routine as the seasons change.

### How do you join?

- Call to register: 519-254-4866 ext. 6225
- Share your email with us
- We will send you a Zoom link

### When are classes?

- Monday at 10:30am
- Tuesday (Intermediate) at 12:30pm
- Tuesday (Seated) at 2:00pm
- Wednesday at 10:30am
- Thursday at 2:00pm

### Why participants choose virtual:

“Recently retired, I joined the VON SMART program of virtual classes about 6 months ago; I know exercise is vital to aging well, and felt I needed to compliment my other forms of exercise (line dancing, chair yoga, and a daily walk with my husband) with more stretching, and appropriate strength training. I particularly like these virtual classes...the instructors' smiling faces (as a retired dental hygienist, I appreciate a warm smile!), knowledgeable class content, encouraging comments, the attentive and engaging manner in which they conduct their classes, and I would be remiss if I didn't mention the creative playlists...music is very motivating for me! In addition, I enjoy the social connection with others, even on Zoom, sharing a common goal of bettering our health. Last but not least, life is busy and the convenience of being able to exercise in this virtual setting is very important to me. I am thankful to have these beneficial classes available to me, right in my own home.”

- Karen, Virtual Participant



## PARTNERSHIP FEATURE

### LEAMINGTON MENNONITE HOME



Mariel Konrad, RN, BScN  
Director of Nursing Care  
& Seniors Services



Residents of LMH's Seniors  
Complex participate in their  
SMART exercise class

The Leamington Mennonite Home (LMH) Retirement residents and community seniors have been benefiting from a partnership with the VON Senior Maintaining Active Roles Together (SMART) Exercise & Fall Prevention Program.

We have had the advantage of having two of our staff undergo specialized training and certification through the VON SMART Program. This has enabled our exercise program to be exceptional for our seniors' physical needs.

We have been running this program for two years now with our two certified staff and have observed the positive changes in residents' overall mobility.

Recently, our Home was invited to participate in a Mobility Matters Checkup Pilot Project that evaluates our senior's mobility, leg strength, balance and endurance. This type of project is invaluable for all seniors living in a Retirement Home and Seniors Living Community for many reasons, such as to name a few:

- Provides a base marker for seniors' activity
- Measures quality improvement
- Seniors receive a written record of their successes and challenges
- Provides encouragement and motivation for seniors to continue attending
- Continued follow-up evaluations every 4 to 6 months

Partnership with the VON SMART Program has given immeasurable insight for our staff, families, and our seniors into the benefits of participating in an exercise program. Our seniors have recognized improvement in their mobility, strength, balance, flexibility and stamina since starting the program. As one resident, Anita stated, “Overall after this time of exercise, I feel energized and that I have had a good workout. I regained use of my shoulders and have less pain now.” For all our residents and seniors in our community, the exercise program has been empowering and motivating for them to continue to attend and the importance of preventing falls. It has also encouraged others who have seen the benefits to join. We hope to continue this invaluable partnership for many years to come.

## CALL FOR MEMBERS

The Chatham-Kent Fall Prevention Network is being re-established and is actively seeking members.

### Things to Know:

- Meet virtually four times per year
- First meeting planned for September 2024

### Who can join?

- Previous members can re-join
- Healthcare organizations
- Retirement Home representatives
- Post-Secondary institutions
- Older Adults in the CK community
- Any individual interested in learning about Fall Prevention and how they can help

### Remember...

It takes a community to prevent falls!



Interested in becoming a member?

Contact Katie at  
[kaitlin.ellery@von.ca](mailto:kaitlin.ellery@von.ca)

**GET INVOLVED**

## CELEBRATING OLDER ADULTS IN THE PARIS OLYMPICS 2024

### Mary Hanna

- 69 years old
- Equestrian
- 7<sup>th</sup> Olympics



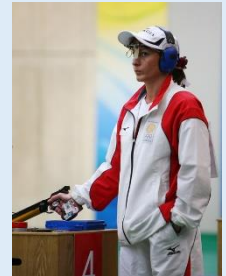
### Zhiying Zeng

- 58 years old
- Table tennis
- 1<sup>st</sup> Olympics



### Nino Salukvadze

- 55 years old
- Shooting
- 10<sup>th</sup> Olympics



### Jill Irving



- 61 years old
- Equestrian
- 1<sup>st</sup> Olympics



**REMINDER**

**NO CLASSES**

**MONDAY OCTOBER 14, 2024**  
(THANKSGIVING)