COUNCIL REPORT

Date: May 5, 2014
From: Jill Lawlor, Community Recreation Manager
Subject: Presentations by the Seniors’ Activity Centre at the World Health Organization and the American Society on Aging Conferences

RECOMMENDED THAT:

1. The report from the Community Recreation Manager, titled “Presentations by the Seniors’ Activity Centre at the World Health Organization and the American Society on Aging Conferences” be received for information.

Purpose

To inform Council of the Seniors’ Activity Centre (“SAC”) presentations at two international conferences relative to the successes of the SAC.

Executive Summary

N/A

1.0 Background

1.1 Prior Resolutions

At the September 17, 2012, regular meeting, Council passed the following resolution:

THAT the report dated August 30, 2012 from the Manager of Community Development, Youth, and Families, titled "Age-friendly Provincial Recognition", be received for information.

1.2 History

The SAC, in addition to facility operation, works with the Seniors’ Activity Centre Advisory Board ("Board"). The Board provides support and advice to staff by offering insight into, and by representing the needs of, the SAC membership.
In 2012, the District was awarded Age-friendly Community status from the Province, as a result of the hard work and dedication of many community groups, including a substantial contribution by the Board.

2.0 Policy

2.1 Policy

The Blueprint for Social Responsibility and Change (2008) provides a framework for a social action plan and identifies strategies to strengthen community social support systems for long term planning and sustainability in West Vancouver.


2.2 Bylaw

N/A

3.0 Analysis

3.1 Discussion

Age-friendly Cities’ Conference (World Health Organization)

In the spring of 2013, staff from the Ministry of Health’s Age-friendly Initiative approached SAC staff, and encouraged staff to apply to the World Health Organization’s (“WHO”) Age-friendly Cities Conference being held in the fall, in Quebec City.

The application was successful, and staff presented on the successes that West Vancouver had achieved in regards to keeping older adults connected in the community. District staff participated at the conference as part of a Canada-wide panel that spoke to the preventative and positive role of recreation in the aging process.

In particular, District staff spoke about three specific initiatives that make the municipality a leader in the field of aging:

i. Keeping Connected Programs

These programs provide support to vulnerable older adults who have suffered a loss, and keep older adults engaged in the community with programs that stimulate both their cognitive and physical capabilities.

ii. LINKS to Health Living Initiative

This initiative is a collaborative partnership with Silver Harbour and the Senior Citizen’s Special Services Society, lead by the District.
initiative reconnects older adults to programs and activities through one-on-one volunteer support. LINKS works to break down barriers such as transportation, fear, lack of knowledge, and lack of finances. Vulnerable older adults that are not active in the community are then able to reengage and to participate in community life, with the support of a volunteer trained to help them for as long as they need it.

iii. SAC Volunteer Program

Staff lastly spoke about the SAC’s thriving volunteer program of almost 700 volunteers and, in particular, about incredibly healthy volunteers such as one member who is 102 years old. The specific health benefits of volunteering were noted (Volunteer Canada 2001), including lower incidences of diabetes and heart disease, and lower blood pressure. It has always been known that volunteering feels good; the research now proves that volunteering does good as well.

After the presentation at the WHO Conference, staff were approached by a variety of organizations, universities, health authorities, and representatives of other countries who were very impressed with the District’s programs, and were curious to learn more about the District’s model of service delivery.

As a result, staff developed relationships across Canada and internationally. In British Columbia, for example, staff have strengthened the SAC’s relationship with the University of British Columbia, and have reached out to Simon Fraser University’s Gerontology Program to explore new opportunities for working together.

American Society on Aging Conference

After the success of the WHO Conference, staff were recommended by the Seniors’ Coalition to apply to speak at the American Society on Aging Conference, the largest conference on aging in North America. Staff approached the Board for support and collaboration, and submitted a successful conference application.

The Chair of the Board and staff presented to a standing-room-only crowd, and spoke about the same initiatives that were presented at the WHO Conference. Information was also shared about the University of British Columbia’s study on the Fit Fella’s program, on the Seniors’ Shuttle Bus, and on volunteer leadership. The presentation was well received.
Outcomes

The Chair of the Board and staff were inspired by the conference, particularly when they learned about the technology that is available (or will be shortly available), which will provide different ways to keep older adults connected outside of traditional methods. The new technology will also provide a variety of smart appliances; and consequently homes that will provide older adults with the support to remain independent.

Since the American Society of Aging Conference, the Chair of the Board and staff have presented what they have learned from attending these two conferences, both internally and at the Seniors' Coalition.

Staff are now working with community partners to develop new health and wellness programs to enhance the current complement of programs at the SAC.

The staff and Board have been invited to present at several other conferences, both in Canada and in the United States, to share the successes of the SAC in West Vancouver. Staff will work collaboratively with the Board to select one of the conferences to present at, in 2015.

The experience at both conferences has highlighted that West Vancouver is a leader in supporting older adults to remain connected and active in the community, and has reinforced West Vancouver’s status as an age-friendly community.

3.2 Sustainability

Ongoing support to the Board is provided through the Community Recreation Manager. SAC and Board initiatives are implemented within annual staff work plans.

3.3 Consultation

The Board has been consulted throughout the application process to the two conferences. The Chair of the Board accompanied staff to the American Society on Aging Conference in San Diego.

3.4 Communications Process

N/A
4.0 Options

4.1 N/A

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