

AGING AT HOME SUCCESS STORIES

May 19, 2009

Ontario's Aging at Home program and community initiatives, which ensure people receive care in appropriate settings, are producing life-changing results for Ontarians across the province. Here are some real-life examples of the program's success:

Going Home Program – Champlain Local Health Integration Network (LHIN)

A 76-year-old Ottawa man, suffering from unmanaged diabetes, arrived at a local emergency room by ambulance. After spending three weeks in hospital he was ready to return home.

At no cost to him, he received transportation home from hospital with a medical escort, light housekeeping, a fix to his broken home plumbing, and nutritious food from Meals on Wheels. After, completing the program, he thanked the coordinator and said his apartment "felt like home again."

Going Home assists admitted hospital patients aged 65 and older. It provides a personalized package of services for 10 days. In 2008/09, the program helped nearly 700 clients recover at home. The program's collaborative approach among health care professionals can result in earlier discharge from hospital and prevent unnecessary hospital visits.

Homeless seniors start to create their own community – Toronto Central LHIN

Kristina and her husband Nicola are just two of the 26 seniors in their building who benefit from the Toronto LHIN's Neighbourhood Link Support Services.

Neighbourhood Link has partnered with Toronto East General Hospital and a not-for-profit health and social services organization to create supportive housing services for homeless, marginally housed seniors, seniors with mental health and addiction issues or seniors living in abusive relationships. Giving these seniors the tools they need to maintain their health and independence relieves pressure on long-term care homes and hospital emergency rooms.

Like the other seniors who live in their building, Kristina and Nicola now have access to two personal support workers and a geriatric mental health case manager. The staff provides assistance with daily living activities, life skills coaching as well as recreational and other activities that increase social contact and decrease isolation. There are 24-hour emergency services available to all residents as well as friendly visiting, security checks and telephone reassurance.

Muskoka Seniors Home Assistance – North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN

Following the passing of his wife, Gordon began receiving assistance at home through Muskoka Seniors. The service allows him to continue living at home by himself.

Every Monday morning, a volunteer calls Gordon to check in on him and invite him to a 'Friendship Luncheon'. Gordon gets a ride to lunch and a nutritious meal.

In addition, the service provides Gordon with transportation to medical appointments and doctors outside the Muskoka area. He also gets access to a Meals on Wheels program on days when he's not well enough to cook for himself.

Because of this program, Gordon will be able to stay in his Fox Lake home for as long as he feels comfortable.

"Muskoka Seniors has been my lifeline since my wife died. I have enjoyed good food and I can get out a bit every month. I don't know what I would do without them." – Gordon F., Muskoka Seniors client.

Wesway Respite Care - North West LHIN

Wesway recently launched a pilot project that delivers respite care services to seniors living in small communities throughout the District of Thunder Bay. Respite care is an essential service for many families who are responsible for the ongoing care of a frail senior.

Here's how some family caregivers have opted to use Wesway's respite care services:

- A 79-year-old woman is caring for her palliative husband. Too often, she was up nearly all night tending to his needs and was becoming exhausted from lack of rest. For respite, Wesway arranged for someone to come into the couple's home for occasional overnight support, so she could get some needed sleep.
- A son who chose to bring his elderly mother home and out of long-term care was finding it challenging to provide ongoing care for her in a busy household with young children. For respite, someone comes into their home and helps care for his mom on a regular basis.
- An elderly woman with health issues of her own is caring for her husband who is a frail stroke survivor. He has always been a sports fan, so respite allows his wife to relax at home while someone takes him out to a hockey game.

These dedicated caregivers need temporary breaks to renew their energy. Strengthened by Wesway's respite services, family caregivers can continue to help their elderly loved ones avoid unnecessary visits to the emergency department and premature admission to long-term care homes.