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ALCOA —
Quarterly Update
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Williamsburg *Creating a Village within the City to Enhance Social Connectedness*

Ron Schlegal, had a vision 16 years ago, before the term “Age-Friendly Communities” was even considered. Using only his own capital, with no government funding, Ron set out to make his vision a reality through the development of Williamsburg.



The essence of a healthy community is revealed not only by where people live, but also by how they live. Sensitivity to optimal design ensures that older adults will have easy walking access to meaningful destinations like parks, grocery stores, and coffee shops where social connections are enhanced. Williamsburg is an innovative “village within the city” that was initiated 16 years ago and driven by 13 guiding principles which were ahead of their time.

For example, a lifespan perspective has led to a social infrastructure which welcomes intergenerational ties. Integral to the design is a “main street” which is reminiscent of a small, friendly community. Mixed



An age-friendly community, with green spaces, outdoor seating, well maintained wide sidewalks, tapered curbs, pedestrian crossings, good street lighting and much more.

housing includes affordable houses, architecturally distinct urban villas overlooking a five-acre village green, and higher density seniors’ apartments which will have a preferred location close to local retail shopping, medical services, and recreational opportunities. All stores are within a ten-minute walk from the seniors’ apartments. And contiguous with these apartments is a seven-acre upland woodlot which provides ready access to a pedestrian trail system linking residential developments to the west and to the north. Adjacent to the main street is a five-acre village green or “passive park”, which acts as a meeting place and will be enhanced by a children’s play area/creative playground, band shell/gazebo, and water feature which can be used for skating in the winter and splash pad for children in the summer.

Recently, focus group testing of the current residents revealed positive attitudinal and behavioural support for the village concept. Residents (young and old) have responded to the principles underlying Williamsburg and they have embraced the vision of “Your Village Within the City”. Nevertheless, they do need to be reminded periodically that “they” are part of this work in progress.

Dr. Mike Sharratt, Ph.D.
Executive Director,
Schlegal-UW RIA





THE ACTIVE LIVING COALITION FOR OLDER ADULTS

Grant Updates

In response to a call for Healthy Living and Chronic Disease Strategy—Cancer Component, from The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), ALCOA received funding to pursue a project entitled *UW WELL-FIT: A holistic framework for active living for older adults with*

UW WELL-FIT Cancer Project

cancer and their partners in care. The intent of the project is to assess and reduce the barriers for older adults living with cancer, thereby allowing them to engage in a structured activity program. This program is designed to reduce the negative side effects of the cancer

treatment. UW WELL-FIT is an activity-based program for cancer patients currently operating out of the University of Waterloo Applied Health Sciences Faculty. Based on cancer statistics, the number of older adults attending this program is under-represented. The intent of this project is to identify the barriers of this population and implement strategies to increase the number of adults attending. The project will not only address this issue but produce a manual to assist other communities in initiating an exercise-based program with specific focus on the older adult with cancer. The project was initiated in May 2008.

A summary of the status at this point in time includes creating a survey which was distributed to all participants currently in the UW WELL-FIT program. This afforded the opportunity to get feedback on the survey itself and assess the ability of older clients to complete the survey without difficulty. Surveys were also mailed to individuals who had been referred to the UW WELL-FIT program over the last 18 months, but chose not to

attend the program. In consultation with the Project Evaluators, suggestions were received from them on ways to make the survey easier to follow and also more readable for the elderly. Approximately 2 weeks were spent in the treatment units at the Grand River Regional Cancer Center approaching individuals with the survey. A data base has been developed, data entered and analysis of the 77 surveys is currently underway. The framework for the “How To” manual is in place and content is currently being compiled.

This PHAC project has generated considerable excitement at the Grand River Regional Cancer Centre and we are optimistic that many current barriers to participation can be overcome.

For more information on the UW WELL-FIT program, please visit their web site at: <http://uwfitness.uwaterloo.ca/wellfit/>

Caryl Russell, MSc. Kin.
Program Director



CIHR Funding Applications

ALCOA has applied for two funding opportunities through the Canadian Institute of Health Research.

* Research Update on Mobility and Aging

This issue would focus on Mobility in Aging, as mobility is key to independence and aging well. This Research Update would explore the research findings of the benefits of physical activity for mobility as well as discuss several factors that affect the mobility of older adults.



THE ACTIVE LIVING COALITION FOR OLDER ADULTS

* **The Development of a National Translation and Evaluation Strategy**

The objective for this funding would be to gather key individuals together to develop a nation-wide communication strategy for knowledge translation for the current "Research Updates" and other future ALCOA documents. The group would also develop an evaluation process to determine the success of the knowledge translation, dissemination process, and any planned future programs or activities of those who are part of the network.

ALCOA should receive notification from CIHR by the end of December. We'll keep you posted.



Active Living and Diabetes: Building on our Successes

ALCOA had received approximately \$24,000 from PHAC to conduct at post project evaluation on our work relating to primary prevention of type II diabetes in older adults. The post project evaluation has now been completed and the report submitted to PHAC, for September 30. Although this evaluation only spanned a six-month time frame, from April 1 – Sept 30,

we were pleased with the work that was completed and the results of the evaluation. Highlights from that report are noted below:

➤ 38 organizations have been involved with this project and the follow up work and hopefully

will continue to partner with ALCOA on future diabetes initiatives

➤ 137 individuals including committee members and ALCOA members have been provided with ongoing updates and communication

➤ The Executive Summary Report from the national meeting has been written, translated and distributed to over 400 individuals, and based on the results from the on-line survey it has been shared with many more individuals/organizations across Canada. Those individuals who received the Executive Summary Report include the national and regional diabetes committee members, ALCOA Manitoba members, 13 Executive Directors from Provincial/Territorial Parks and Recreation Associations, and interested delegates at the International Federation on Aging Conference held in Montreal in September. In addition, there has also been over 2200 hits to the diabetes pages on the ALCOA website in the past six months.

➤ Other excellent resources available on the web site include:

- DVD of leading practice programs for the prevention of type II diabetes in older adults
- 100-page resource book providing details on 33 prevention program across Canada

➤ A strategic planning meeting was held with the ALCOA Guardians to develop a logic model for future diabetes projects, as they relate to the 'national recommendations for action' that were developed from the consultation meeting held last February.

This project is now completed, but ALCOA is hopeful that there will be funding opportunities available in the future, to allow us to continue on with projects relating to this strategy.



Planning for ALCOA's Future

The Guardians met in late August, in Toronto, to develop a framework for a future strategic plan for ALCOA. Facilitated by Patsy Beattie-Huggan, the Guardians reviewed the current document that was written as a result of the National Diabetes Consultation meeting that was held in February 2008 in Ottawa. The delegates from the national meeting had developed *National Recommendations for Action*, and a *Go Forward Strategy for ALCOA*. As part of the 'Go-Forward Strategy' in that report, the Guardians developed a logic model for potential future diabetes work and funding opportunities.

The diabetes strategy was then embedded into an overall framework for future project initiatives for ALCOA. We will keep you posted with the development of this strategy. At present, it still remains as a draft framework, but does provide ALCOA with the basis to develop a full plan and pursue funding opportunities.

ALCOA Member Spotlight

Mike Sharratt

Until last year, Mike was the Dean of the Faculty of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Waterloo. Last year he retired from the University and is now the Executive Director for the Schlegal-University of Waterloo Research Institute for Aging, in Kitchener, Ontario. The RIA promotes research relevant to aging in community and congregate settings. It focuses on practice-relevant research as a driving force behind innovation and quality care.

Over the years, Mike's research interests have spanned the age continuum from children and youth to older adults. Previously he was the co-chair, along with representatives from the Public Health Agency of Canada, in producing Canada's Physical Activities Guide for Children and Youth. Currently, his research



ALCOA Guardians

(l-r) back row: Sharon Purvis, Bill Krever, Sheila Schuehle, Carol Miller, Charles Keple, Patsy Beattie-Huggan (facilitator), Mike Sharratt

(l-r) front row: Michelle Porter, Brenda Wong, Patty Clark, Don Fletcher

Absent: Clara Fitzgerald, Jack Brownell



interests relate to the plasticity of aging with emphasis on those recoverable components which are influenced by sedentary/active living rather than aging, per se.

In addition, Mike is a long-term member of the Research Update Committee for ALCOA, and he is also currently on the ALCOA Executive.

Mike recently made a presentation at the International Federation of Aging Conference in Montreal, in September 2008, where he spoke about his work with Ron Schlegal and the Williamsburg development.