

BOWMONT SENIORS ASSISTANCE ASSOCIATION

2016 ANNUAL REPORT

Distributed at BSAA's Annual General Meeting, April 20, 2017

"I am driven by a deep passion and a need to make a difference and leave this world a little better than when I arrived. That is what keeps me going."

*Rick Hansen, Companion of the Order of Canada, Order of British Columbia,
Canadian Paralympian, activist and philanthropist*

BOWMONT SENIORS ASSISTANCE ASSOCIATION (BSAA)

For almost 45 years – since the mid-1970s -- some variation of the BSAA has been part of the fabric of Bowness, Montgomery and Greenwood Village in Northwest Calgary. Throughout our association's very long history, our goals have been the same – to address issues that concern seniors and to create community solutions so that seniors may live in health, comfort and dignity.

It's now almost 20 years into the 21st century. Times have both changed remained the same. There are still issues of isolation, poverty, mental health and abuse. The aging population still needs information on services available to seniors: housing, transportation, legal and tax information, food services and medical information. There is a need to help seniors understand what is available to them and to help access information and services.

Many of these issues and concerns, which were historically the board's challenges because we saw a need and chose to take on the challenges, have been taken over by our partner, Carya, their outreach workers and other social service agencies. These are competent, caring, professional hands that help our citizens.

However, there is still a huge need in the community to be a voice for seniors, and to advocate for seniors on local, provincial and national levels. Close to home, we can be and are a social network that helps seniors stay involved with their communities. Our board members, through their desire to help, and with a keen understanding of the realities and challenges of being seniors today, provide time and extra hands to make life easier. There are still ways – different than they were 45 years ago – that we, the BSAA board, can and do make a difference.

Changes in the board's makeup

2016 saw a huge shift in the board's membership. Many of our directors retired at the end of the 2015 year.

Our president of many years, Ella Berrington, stepped down as president this past summer, due to some health challenges. We are grateful that her dedication and knowledge remain with us as she has agreed to remain on the board as Past President and mentor.

Our new board has stepped up with amazing skill and enthusiasm to continue the fantastic work started over the years. To go along with our on-going initiatives, there are some new projects that have just been launched and some exciting developments that are just starting to coalesce.

Ad Hoc Advisory Committee

To assist the board with the work that it does, the board has developed an Ad Hoc Advisory Committee, primarily consisting of retired board members, who will add their expertise and willing hands when the board requires help and advice. These folks will also be asked to attend

key briefing meetings by Carya staff and others invited to speak to the board. At the discretion of the board, others, with different skillsets, may be asked to become part of this committee.

Tea and Conversation (T&C)

Our T&C has continued to be a popular outing for approximately 60 seniors each month. The event, held the fourth Tuesday of every month except June, July and August and December, is a cornerstone of the board's initiatives. Hosted by the board and Carya at the Bowness Seniors' Centre hall, the afternoon consists of local entertainment – a band, folk-singing duo or dancing troupe. Coffee, tea and snacks are served and well received. We also run a 50-50 draw, much to the delight of the attendees. The ladies from RockPointe Church set the tables, serve the food and coffee and clean the kitchen afterwards. The ladies also provide decorations for the individual tables, making the event quite festive.

At the Christmas T&C (Nov.) for the past two years, the Church has prepared and donated a fully-cooked ham dinner to attendees.

Simon House provides take-down service for the table and chairs and puts them away as their contribution to our Tea and Conversation.

The event is well-received by the isolated seniors we invite (and assorted guests who are asked to participate to mix with those who are isolated). Evidence of this – although the tea starts at 1:30 pm, almost everyone is there by 12:30.

Several Carya staff, most of our current board and past board members attend on a regular basis.

T&C Survey

Since many seniors have transportation issues, we as a board are concerned about how people are getting to and from T&C. We know, anecdotally, of people who cannot come because they can't get there. In bad weather, this issue is magnified.

We also wanted to know if people want to continue with the current design of the program – or would they like to change it up. For example, would they rather play games or cards on some days, or are they happy with the current T&C design – sitting around for an hour with music (and often sing-along), a snack and visit.

While we, as a board, have no solution to the transportation issues at the moment, we want to have a better handle on the needs of our clients.

A questionnaire on these issues, developed in 2016, was handed out in February, 2017.

Calgary Herald Christmas Fund

In early 2014, The Calgary Herald awarded BSAA \$95,150 from their Christmas Fund campaign of late 2013. The money was to be used to help seniors in Carya's older adult programs who are in dire need on a one-time emergency basis.

When the board received the money, a decision was made to mete out the money over approximately 10 years. The rest of the money is cautiously invested in Guaranteed Income Certificates (GICs). Although they do not generate much interest, GICs will not go down in value.

Carya outreach providers decide how the money (approximately \$10,000 per year) is used. Often it is for such urgent needs as changing the locks on a home or apartment after there has been a domestic issue. Buying a new bed for someone in a bug-infested apartment. Paying for groceries or a one-time prescription that is not covered. Buying a bus tickets so someone can visit a dying relative a couple of hundred kilometres journey away. There is no money for anything like these very real issues anywhere else in the system for these emergencies.

The money from the fund has allowed our outreach workers to make lives a little easier.

This past year, we used approximately \$8,000 from the fund.

Silver Alert

2016 saw our board take the lead in Calgary – and to some extent, across Canada – in looking into how to help our seniors who wander from home and are lost because they suffer from Alzheimer's or dementia and are incapable of finding their way back. According to Calgary Police, almost 200 seniors were reported missing last year because of these illnesses, and this number is just the tip of the iceberg. Many families do not report their wandering older adults. They just look for them with the help of family members or neighbours.

The project was flagged as a possible task for the board in 2014. In 2015, we struck a subcommittee and hired Dr. Sue McIntyre and her Hindsight Group to do an "environmental scan" to research what had been done in Canada, the US and parts of Europe. The money to hire her came from a grant from the United Way.

The information was fascinating. In the US, 43 states had very different versions of Silver Alert, a system that for the most part piggy-backs on the Amber Alert system set up for missing children. However, the system is set up by each state, so there are similarities and many differences in how they are run. In Canada, there is no such system.

Part of the reason there is nothing in Canada for wandering older adults is that here, the Amber Alert system is national, held by the RCMP and is assumed to have a criminal component. That is not the case with seniors who are wandering because of dementia or Alzheimer's. They usually are found within a five kilometre radius of home, and are just confused. There is no criminal component.

We decided, since our mandate is very local, to see what we could do on a local scale. The intricacies and challenges of getting something launched on a national scale is beyond our mandate, time and budget.

We had the idea of getting a Silver-Alert-type program inserted in Calgary's Age Friendly Strategy task force in 2015. At that time, we had no information, but we wanted the idea entrenched so that we could get buy-in from others as we did more research.

In 2016, our research and discussions led us to the conclusion that we needed to bring more people into the conversation. We developed a core group or steering committee of ourselves, Carya, the police, the city, the United Way and the Alzheimer's Society to assess the findings of the report.

We then invited the City, The Calgary Police, The Alzheimer's Society, Carya, the University of Alberta, the United Way and assorted other interested professionals who deal with these issues to meet and discuss our findings, then continue on to develop some Calgary-based solutions. This meeting was held in the fall. Approximately 30 professionals and 4 of our board members attended. There was interest and enthusiasm from all who attended and agreement was made to meet again, to zero in on and hone some strategies around our wandering seniors.

This same core group/steering committee then decided that the initial work had been done, and the continuation was far bigger than the BSAA. We reluctantly handed it off to those with more time, influence, expertise and money than BSAA has to continue its journey.

Kim Savard, our Carya Program Manager, has been instrumental in the whole process and continues to be involved with the next stage.

The project is currently held by the leader of Age-Friendly Calgary and the rest of the steering subcommittee.

It is a grass-roots project that we hope will take wing, as time goes on.

Our Group Voice/Feedback

As seniors in a long-time community group that is well-respected for the service given to the community, the board members have been asked on occasion to be sounding boards for ideas and fledgling programs that need input to see if they are viable.

This past year, we have had the honour of being involved in several potential projects.

- In 2015, we were asked to give input into the Golden Hands project, an initiative to develop a list of contractors/handyman who would be trained in seniors' issues, then could proceed to offer their services (for a fee) to seniors in Bowness, Montgomery and Greenwood Village. We allowed them to make a presentation at T&C in November, 2015, and ask for input from our participants.

Since then, the project has been launched, with modifications, and is functioning in the area.

- Carya staff asked our members to be part of a presentation/group conversation on Elder Abuse. Many of our board members attended and gave feedback on the project and process.
- The board met with Dr. Candace Konnert from the University of Calgary to gain information on a project she is working on with her graduate students. The project is examining how people plan for their own aging and the specific actions that they have taken or will take in preparation for growing older. Most of the board members filled out her questionnaire online. We were asked for ideas on how she could get more participants for her project. We had numerous suggestions and thought it might be a good short presentation for a future T&C.
- And we tried, unsuccessfully, to get funding for an additional sum of money from the 2016 Herald Christmas Fund. BSAA applied for money to help Carya staff deal with cleaning up apartments and homes where there is a hoarding issue. While the Herald board that decides on who gets the money acknowledged that the issue was a concern, we were not awarded money this year. However, we were asked to submit another application for 2017.

Discount Sheets

The board decided that a useful project with almost no cost that we could tackle was the development of a discount sheet, letting our seniors know what discounts they could expect at businesses on a daily, weekly or monthly basis in the local area. For example, every Tuesday, the Bownesian Grocery Store gives a 10% discount to seniors. While some of our seniors are aware of some of the discounts, keeping track – although very useful financially – can be difficult.

This sheet will be updated and added to approximately every quarter. Initial reaction, when it was handed out at T&C in January, 2017 for the first time, was very favourable.

We envision this tool as being widely distributed, useful to our seniors and something we, as BSAA, can contribute to the community.

Hearing loss

We met with audiologist Dr. Carrie Scarff, of Audiology Innovations. She is eager and active advocate for people with hearing issues. She is trying to help low income seniors hear well. She is on the Deaf and Hear Alberta board, as well as running her own clinics.

Seniors, she tells us (and we know from other sources) who can't hear what is going on often drop out of their activities and community events, because they cannot understand what is being said. They get more and more isolated, which can cause many health issues.

She is interested in helping the BSAA board partner with the Deaf and Hear board to develop a pilot project for recycling hearing aids. It would mean our board would be working with the other board and Dr. Scarff to figure out the logistics, apply for funding and approaching retirement homes, offices, community associations, the media, etc., to educate people on what can be done with hearing aids that are no longer needed. Once the hearing aids are collected in boxes at, say, a nursing home desk, they would be picked up and passed on to Dr. Scarff's clinics for professional cleaning and sterilization.

Once the hearing aid mini-computers are reset, seniors can be assessed and trained how to use these net-to-new products by Dr. Scarff and her associates.

There are currently no hearing aid recycling projects in Alberta and few in Canada.

This is not a money-making scheme. Rather, it is a project that would allow low income seniors a chance to get good quality hearing aids at little or no cost, allowing them the opportunity to hear and to stay involved. It is a project the board is excited about and sees a huge need for.

We will report more on this as the project evolves.

Visioning

In the fall of 2016, we held two visioning workshops for the board. The new board needed orientation, a chance to examine old ideas and the stated mission and by-laws of the association.

It's interesting to note that our mission has changed little – only minor word adjustments – since it was developed 45 years ago.

We also updated our bylaws. While again there were no major changes, wording needed to be updated. This will be submitted to Corporate Registries this spring, as required by legislation.

Casino

We participate in volunteer-run casinos approximately every 18 months, as allowed by our mandate as a non-profit organization. For two days of volunteering by board members, friends, family, Carya personnel (who volunteer their time) and a lot of effort by many people, our participation nets us substantial funds.

The two days volunteer work is put into a pool of other non-profit groups doing the same thing, and the money is divided evenly amongst participating groups. This past April, our share was \$67,612. This amount is down a bit from 2015, most likely because of the economic downturn Calgary has experienced.

This money is used by BSAA primarily to cover our insurance costs and a few minor expenditures. The bulk is used to help fund a Carya outreach position, so that we have enough people to help our seniors' population.

Financials

Our volunteer accountant, Ross Fujino, as he has for many years, continues to provide us with unwavering, accurate and trusted help as we travel the BSAA road to helping seniors. His financial report and assessment for 2016, as well as the auditor's report, are attached.

Our auditor, as in the past, is Stu Kinsey. According to both Stu and Ross, BSAA is on solid financial footing.

Future

In a changing world, little is certain. However, we, as the Bowmont Seniors Assistance Association, have a strong history helping seniors in Bowness, Montgomery and Greenwood Village.

We have a strong partnership with Carya, and especially with Kim Savard, the Program Manager, who mentors, leads and links us with people and projects.

We have phenomenal help from so many places (our thank you list is attached), from RockPointe Church to local MLAs and many folks and organizations in between.

We have a strong board. Every person is eager to take on tasks, voice opinions and work without ego to the benefit of all.

We have long-held tasks we will continue. T&C, our advisory capacity, our casino. We also have new tasks afoot – from our newly minted discount sheet to potential for a hearing aid recycling project. Other ideas are in infancy, but will be explored further as 2017 proceeds.

Our challenges are many. We need a few more board members, eager to pitch in and help with the many tasks we see as valuable to the community. We need to decide whether we stay focussed on Bowness, Montgomery and Greenwood Village, or do we expand. If so, how? We need to decide whether to try to find more funding for issues like bussing seniors to T&C. And how will we help Carya fund the crisis fund once our money from the Herald Fund runs out in a few years?

Yes, we have challenges. We also have history. We have optimism. We have willing hands. We have many reasons to be proud and humble and thankful.

Our Board Members

President: Kerry Tremblay

Vice President: Margaret Hildebrand

Treasurer: Ross Fujino

Past President: Ella Berrington

Director Mary Coulson

Director Esther McIntosh

Director Deane (Dee) Vincent

Director Marian Fox

Director Colleen Groves

3 board positions are currently vacant

Carya Liaison: Kim Savard

Our Community Partners:

Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission

Bowness Seniors Centre

BSAA board members

Calgary Alzheimer's Society

Calgary Herald Christmas Fund

Calgary Police Services

Carya

Casino volunteers

City of Calgary

City of Calgary Councillor Ward Sutherland

Institute of Chartered Accountants

MLA Deborah Drever

Montgomery Community Association

RockPointe Church

Dr. Carrie Scarff

Simon House volunteers

United Way of Calgary

University of Calgary