



**Bowmont Seniors Assistance Association**  
**Annual Report, 2019**

**There are only two days in the year that nothing can be done. One is called yesterday and the other is called tomorrow, so today is the right day to love, believe, do and mostly live.**

**...Dalai Lama**

## **About Bowmont Seniors Assistance Association**

Bowmont Seniors Assistance Association, (BSAA), has been helping seniors in the Bowness, Montgomery and Greenwood Village neighbourhoods of Northwest Calgary for close to 50 years.

We are, and always have been, seniors helping seniors. In the early days, our mission, as volunteers, was to help seniors fill in complicated government forms that allowed them to access services they needed, plus help low-income seniors file their income tax forms. Over time, needs changed and became more complicated. The association needed to hire professional social workers to help with the complex needs of the clientele.

With time, the board's role has shifted. About 10 years ago, the board entered into a formal contract with Carya, (then Calgary Family Services), partnering with them to employ the staff and run the outreach programs. This allowed the staff to be a part of a larger, more recognized group with better resources and training opportunities, be paid more money and have benefits. For the Bowmont clients, it meant having more and easier access to services for their sometimes complex needs. Over the years since, we have kept up this close relationship with our Carya partners and the social workers – or service coordinators, as they are now called.

With the weight to paying salaries and monitoring employees lifted from us, the BSAA board now continues our work in other ways. Our links to the communities we serve remains strong and has expanded in exciting ways.

Our mission – *“to address issues that concern seniors and assist in creating community solutions so that seniors may live in health, comfort and dignity”* – has remained our reason to stay as a strong volunteer source and resource within the three communities.

## **The Bowmont Seniors Constellation**

As a very small volunteer board with only 9 current members, BSAA has limited capacity to take on big, time-intensive projects. However, we have found a solution to this – by joining forces with other like-minded groups and organizations in the area.

In 2017, BSAA banded together with Bowness Seniors Centre, Bow Centre Place, Carya, a City of Calgary social worker, a representative from the University of Calgary School of Nursing (who trains first year nursing students working in the community) and Greenwood Village Enrichment Association. At the time, we also included the MLA for the area. With the change in elected officials for the area, that link is lost. However, we have reached out to the new MLA for the area and are in contact with him.

The Constellation has four main purposes:

- to share information and concern that affect all the different groups and the seniors they serve

- to create joint solutions, reached through discussion and experience-sharing, that meet our broader needs
- to develop and present opportunities, allowing us to get critical information to seniors through a series of carefully- chosen seminars
- to act as an information-sharing mechanism among the communities, social services and the various levels of government.

We meet monthly. While our liaison is informal, the links are strong and the level of cooperation and trust that has developed over three years is a tribute to all involved.

In 2019, we focused on providing two presentations for seniors in the area, on the Business of Dying. The topic was presented by a couple of ladies who call themselves Crows in a Row. These seminars proved to be very well attended and had some interesting information for all attendees. Topics included wills, powers of attorney, funerals, burials, types of memorials, new trends in funerals and, on a different note, legacies. Probably the most moving part of the two presentations was the integration of the thought process on how one wants to be remembered by those left behind.

Approximately 75 people attended each session. Feedback was extremely positive.

With each small group taking a chunk of the organization for the seminars, these outreach projects have become very manageable. Without the group's support, we would not be able to get this vital information out to the people we serve.

In 2020, we are taking a slightly different focus to our presentations, but that is the topic for the 2020 annual report.

### **Tea and Conversation**

Eight months of the year, BSAA, in conjunction with Carya, hosts an afternoon Tea and Conversation on the fourth Tuesday of the month. T&C is an event that gives isolated seniors and those who looking for a welcoming place to spend a convivial afternoon a chance to come, snack, drink tea and coffee, chat and listen to timely music.

Several of the outreach workers attend, greet the participants, and are available if needed or if questions arise.

For 40-50 seniors, it is a highlight of their month. Unfortunately, numbers are down somewhat from past years. As far as we can determine, this is a natural phenomenon. Some of our stalwart attendees have died, others have gone into seniors residences and still others are in poor health and cannot attend. For those who do attend, it's free, lively, welcoming and non-threatening. We've

also been able to add, through a small grant, some taxi funds that allow people who can't get there from the area a chance to come.

It's a community event. The hall is loaned to us by the Bowness Seniors Centre. RockPointe Church volunteers serve and clean up for us. For the past four years, they have provided a ham dinner on the last T&C before Christmas (in November). Simon House volunteers put away the tables and chairs after the event. Past and present board members mingle and look after the popular 50-50 draw.

### **Hearing loss/Hearing aid recycling**

This project has had a long lead-in, but finally launched this year. Five people who had severe hearing loss and could not afford hearing aids or qualify for free ones are now hearing.

In June, 2019, three years of planning, networking and working hard finally paid off. Five people walked into the Carya office on Bowness Road not being able to hear much, were assessed, measured and given recycled hearing aids by Dr. Carrie Scarff and her staff from Audiology Innovations. It was a highlight of the year, and one we hope to be able to continue and expand as time goes on.

Here is an abbreviated history on this project. In 2016, the Board was approached by Dr. Scarff of Audiology Innovations. She wanted our help to set up a recycled hearing aid project, on a very limited scale, to test its feasibility. People could donate their unneeded hearing aids to us. She proposed that she could check them and ensure that they were still usable, sanitize them, reprogram them and give them to seniors who could not afford hearing aids and who could not qualify to get them through various programs in the province.

According to Dr. Scarff, one of the key concerns for increased risk of dementia is hearing loss. If people can't hear clearly, they stop going out to any social occasions. They stop answering the phone because they can't hear people on the other end. If they live alone, there is often nobody to socialize with, and the downward spiral into isolation, loneliness and possibly dementia accelerates.

During our journey to getting this started, we discovered that the Lions Club had started to collect hearing aids as well as glasses, to be sent overseas to developing countries. We didn't want to push our way in to a program the Lions Club had already defined and developed, so we needed to come to an agreement with them.

Our vice-president, Margaret Hildebrand, met with the Lions Club representative who is responsible for this effort, and he agreed to let us have first dibs on any hearing aids. Marg and a couple of our other board members toured the facility where the Lions Club cleans and sorts the glasses and hearing aids they collect and were impressed with the operation. They were given boxes of used hearing aids to inspect and see what was useful to us.

The next step was to go through the boxes and figure out what we had, but first Marg and Directors Marian Fox and Dee Vincent had to find out what we were looking for. Doctor Scarff met with them and showed them how to sort effectively for what was useable, from her perspective.

Our next task was to figure out what criteria would be used to select the candidates for these hearing aids. That has now been done. It's a blend of need, inability to pay, a desire to participate and commitment to be part of the process. Carya service coordinators selected eligible candidates.

The board has agreed to pick up the minor costs of having the hearing aids refurbished for these candidates. Board members have also been distributing boxes for the Lions Club in their collection efforts.

It's been a long journey to get to this stage. If this small project is successful, it could be the first step to expanding the reach of this to all of Calgary.

2020 will be a critical year in defining where this project goes. For 2019, our goals were met and we were pleased.

We received a small grant from Jim and Mary Sibthorpe Family Foundation to help with the costs of refurbishing the hearing aids.

## **Casino**

Historically, BSAA has a casino every 16-18 months. We had no casino in 2019.

This ability to work in and receive profits from the casinos is part of the program that non-profit organizations are allowed to participate in through the province of Alberta. It has, over the years, given us some operating funds – most of which we turn over to Carya, to help support the salary of an outreach worker specializing in seniors issues in Calgary. A minor amount is kept by the board to pay our administrative costs, like board insurance and auditing costs.

Our next casino will be in the first quarter of 2020.

## **BSAA Website and Rack Cards**

Now that our new, trendy website is up and running, we have been concentrating on developing upgraded rack cards and images to be used on the tables, etc., at T&C.

The biggest hitch to the website is our web designer, Lana Berrington, has been tied up with family commitments in 2019 and we did not want to intrude on her personal time.

## **Calgary Herald Christmas Fund**

In 2014, The Calgary Herald awarded BSAA \$95,150 from their Christmas Fund Campaign of 2013. The money was to be used in Cary's Older Adult programs, by people who are in dire financial need on a one-time emergency basis.

When our board received the money, a decision was made to mete it out over a 10-year period. The remaining money is invested in Guaranteed Income Certificates (GICs), so that it is protected from the convolutions of the stock market, but it gains some interest.

Carya service coordinators decide how the money is to be used.

The money from the fund has allowed outreach workers to make lives a little easier. There is no funding in the social services system for emergencies that often are very small, but \$50 can be an insurmountable amount when there is not enough money for food that month or a prescription refill.

In 2019, the expenditure was \$9,152. Generally, we budget for approximately \$10,000 per year.

The challenge here is to be able to maintain and increase this small pot of money long into the future.

## **Discount Sheets**

In January, 2017, the board launched our seniors discount sheets. These reflect and capture the discounts available to seniors in the Bowness, Montgomery and Greenwood Village area and close areas, like the Value Village in Silver Springs. It has been very successful and is still in demand.

In fact, other areas of the city have asked to copy the idea.

Updated four times per year by Cary's office staff, the single-page roundup captures what deals are out there for seniors (usually a percentage off the regular price of goods and/or services).

## **Silver Alert**

This has been a long-time project for BSAA. Although we launched the initial research and then brought in groups such as Calgary Police, Age Friendly Calgary and numerous others, we realized that the work to be done – both in Calgary and across the province, would be more than our little board could handle. We just don't have the resources. The questions we asked and the links we forged, however, have grown across the country and around the world.

The work is ongoing. While Calgary doesn't have a Silver Alert program as we had initially envisioned, does have a cohesive approach to helping seniors with dementia who wander. There is a broader understanding of the issues among the responders. There is a toolkit being developed that would support vulnerable populations that are at risk of going missing and their caregivers.

While the work is still in progress on our Silver Alert project, we are pleased that so many professionals have taken time to work toward a useful project.

Bringing the topic up and handing it over to the right professionals is a tribute to our board and Kim Savard's passion for people and her networking skills.

### **Our Experience and Involvement in the Wider Community**

Because our board members are seniors with significant life experience and are a group known for giving frank feedback, we are sometimes asked to evaluate or give opinions on new or upcoming projects. As part of our involvement with Kim Savard of Carya and the Silver Alert Project, we were asked to give feedback to a student working on dementia research at the University of Alberta, Noelannah Neubauer.

She asked the board if we would review her newly developed guidelines for identifying the risks of seniors going missing. She asked for feedback on the content and layout of the one-page sheet. Each board member looked at this and gave their feedback.

### **Seniors Secret Service**

For the second year, some of our board members have participated in Carya's project to ensure that seniors who might not get anything for Christmas do get a basket, containing anything from a warm and fuzzy wrap to new socks and slippers, depending on the need and request or suggestion. Carya make referrals to Seniors Secret Service who assemble the gifts in appropriate gift bags, label them and organize everything. Then one day, a week or so before Christmas, staff, family, friends and board members deliver the gifts. It's a lovely tradition we hope to be able to continue participating in.

### **Financials**

As in previous years, our volunteer board member and accountant Ross Fujino has provided expert and excellent support to us as a board. He keeps our books, ensures that the money is managed appropriately through the bank, deals with Carya requests for cheques to be signed and keeps us on track.

Our auditor is Shahid Naqi Professional Corporation.

Copies of our financial report are attached to this annual report.

## **Our Future**

As volunteers, and as seniors with busy lives ourselves, juggling the demands and requirements of our commitments to BSAA and our own lives is sometimes a challenge.

However, we are on a strong trajectory, buoyed by a strong team, great support from many people and a passion for trying to help make seniors' lives easier.

Our partnership with Carya remains strong. They are our eyes and ears into the issues of the elderly. As seniors from Northwest Calgary, we have our own experiences to add to the mix. Our links with Bowness Seniors, the Bowness Constellation, the Calgary Police, Dr. Carrie Scarff, the Lions Club and others help us in our mission.

We have five seniors in the community who can hear this year, and hope to add a few more over the coming year. That in itself is a huge accomplishment, thanks to the commitment and dedication of board members Marg Hildebrand and Marian Fox.

We have long-held projects we will continue. These include our Tea and Conversation, our Casino, the discount sheet and our advisory capacity on many topics that come our way.

We are exploring new avenues that will allow us to help others, but those are in their infancy or need a re-vamp in the way we want to tackle them. These projects include continuing to explore hearing aid recycling, and hopefully expanding it.

Our thoughts on possibly setting up a program for handing out cane tips/picks for winter and non-slip pull on Yak Traks or something similar to help seniors NOT fall didn't get out of the starting gate this year, but Carya's Kate Hunter has similar ideas on senior mobility. So that may take off in 2020. And through the Bowmont Constellation, we are exploring other ways of helping seniors stay connected with each other, so they don't get so isolated.

We need to find a few new board members or board assistants to help share the load and to do some specialized work like apply for grants for projects we would like to have funding for.

We are busy. We are committed. We are motivated to help seniors. And we give thanks that we are part of a strong network of people who really want to help seniors.



## **Our Board Members**

President:	Kerry Tremblay
Vice President:	Margaret Hildebrand
Treasurer:	Ross Fujino
Director:	Marian Fox
Director:	Arlene Thompson
Director:	Colleen Groves
Director:	Deane (Dee) Vincent
Director:	Caroline Frenette
Director:	Rebecca Westecott
Carya Liaison:	Kim Savard

**4 board positions are currently vacant**

### **Ella's passing**

Sadly, this past year saw the passing of our past president, **Ella Berrington**. She was a beautiful person with a passionate belief in people. From her early days as a young mother teaching other young moms how to cook nutritious meals on a shoestring budget (or less), to her work with volunteer groups, her thought was always on the people she served. At forty, she returned to school to become a social worker, so she could better work for the people she fought for so passionately. She will be sorely missed, as an advisor, a friend and a visionary.