

March 19, 2020  
[www.agefriendlysk.ca](http://www.agefriendlysk.ca)




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# NEWSLETTER

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## 10 Ways We Can Be Age-Friendly in the Time of COVID-19

*It is March 19, 2020 and 9:30 AM in our small Saskatchewan town. I have just returned home from grocery shopping for my household and three senior neighbours. I sanitized the handle of my grocery cart and was halfway down the first aisle before I realized I left my list in the car. (Just a little distracted!) Many shelves of staples are empty, and store workers are quickly working to refill them. Toilet paper is restricted to one package/day per customer. I spoke (standing 2 meters away) to staff and heard stories of panic shopping and their personal exhaustion.*

*Today they start free delivery to anyone in town. Unlike a neighbouring village whose small grocery is opening early (8-9 AM) for seniors & immune-compromised customers only, this store is not yet providing that designated early morning "window". Shelves are empty in the morning while they wait for trucks to unload and staff to refill shelves. However, they are offering free delivery to anyone in town. The neighbouring village store also offers free delivery to RURAL residents.*

*I chatted (again at a distance) to a retired neighbour who described how bored she is at home and she "just doesn't know what to believe on TV and social media". She expressed concern about her sister who lives in longterm care and is allowed no visitors. As I walked to my car with groceries for four households, a stranger called out from two cars away "Good morning, and how are YOU doing?". I smiled and called back "Just fine but still in some shock about COVID-19 And how are YOU?". We continued our conversation while laughing to be heard above migrating Canada Geese honking loudly overhead.*

How can the story of a half hour at the grocery store inform our commitment to being Age-Friendly in an unprecedented time in our lives?

At a time of '**social distancing**' or '**physical distancing**', we need to ensure that our family, friends, neighbours and community residents are **not socially isolated**.

**What can we do from our homes to continue Age-Friendly work?**

## Here are 10 ideas based on my grocery shop this morning.

- "Find 3 buddies" to be in touch with daily. Whom can you call each day to share how you are feeling? Do you know someone who could use three buddies? Someone in a care home who is able to talk on a phone? A neighbour in the country? A teenager who is texting and on the internet, but may not be talking on their phone? How about starting up an old-fashioned phone-tree with a particular organization (such as a Seniors group or in your apartment complex)? ("Find 3 buddies" credited to Saskatoon Medical Health Officer Dr Johnmark Opondo)
- If you live in a small rural community, consider placing a flyer in every mailbox offering to get groceries or run errands for someone who can't or should not go out. The *Canada Post* cost for such a flyer is minimal in small towns. If you are a city resident, consider putting that flyer in the mailboxes of people that live on your street. Recruit the help of a teenager who is out of school. If this is an Age-Friendly effort agreed to by your Committee, add your Age-Friendly logo to the communication.
- Check in with yourself often. How are you really feeling? distracted? edgy? sharp with loved ones? scared? confused? concerned about a friend who is ill? disappointed that long planned for events are cancelled yet feeling guilty for feeling that way when your neighbour is out of the country and trying to get home? Many of us have a myriad of feelings right now. Practice self-care for yourself and share your care with others. Cut everyone and yourself some slack.
- Time on your hands? How about cooking a meal for a tired, stressed health worker or grocery clerk?
- Concerned about what will happen to the independent coffee shop down the street that is now open for take-out only? Buy a gift certificate to help their current cash flow and use it when it re-opens and is filled with customers again (when cash-flow will not be as tight). We need our local businesses to survive this pandemic so they are there for our future Age-Friendly endeavours.
- What about your local Food Bank? Phone to see what specific help they need right now. Might a local restaurant that is temporarily closing donate perishables that can be packaged for pick-up by Food Bank clients? Consider financial donations to Food Banks so they can buy in bulk.
- Do you have a vehicle? Could the local business in town (grocery, pharmacy) use a driver to deliver food and medications?
- Do you have a rainy-day stash of toilet tissue, canned goods, and ground beef? Might anyone you know need some?
- How about a call to the Recreation Director of your local carehome? How can you help prevent social isolation? Write cards to the residents? Canada Post indicates that there is very low risk of spreading COVID-19 in incoming mail. (canadapost.ca)

- Monitor how much news you read or watch and who are the authorities that you are listening to.  
At the end of this email is a list of reliable CANADIAN contacts.

Have you heard of '**caremongering**' that is 'trending' in Canada this week? Stay tuned for next week's newsletter where I will say more.

I welcome your ideas of what you are doing that is **Age-Friendly in the Time of COVID-19**, and I will share them in next week's newsletter.

Click on the two sites below for up-to-date Canadian information.

[GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN](#)

[GOVERNMENT OF CANADA](#)

Thank you for reading and forwarding to your Age-Friendly Committees!

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