

GRAY MATTERS

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Winter 2026



Social Prescribing *In Action*

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Those of us who were born before the 70's may still believe that the medical system can address every health discomfort we experience. Often, our first inclination is to make an appointment with our GP (if we are fortunate to have one) or queue up at an urgent care or ER to "get this looked at and fixed". Often that is absolutely the course of action to take, but every problem that we experience is not necessarily appropriate for medical intervention. Here in the pages of Gray Matters we have often mentioned the predilection professionals and patients/consumers have for expecting a pill for every ill. In fact a well known comedian from 15 years ago, Ray Stevens, developed a whole stand-up routine called "There must be a pill for that". That was his punch line when he made fun of the foibles and trouble of everyday life. But reality is different.

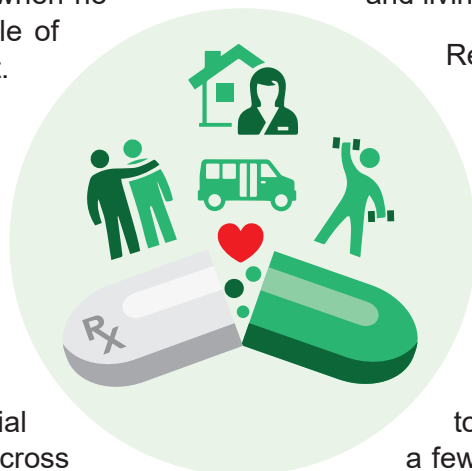
Social Prescribing, the exciting 4 year initiative that SSM has undertaken, can be one way of addressing some of the issues that come with aging without needing that proverbial pill! Through a 2023-2027 grant from Waltons Trust, SSM has committed to oversee the introduction of Social Prescribing in 12 communities across Saskatchewan, collect evaluation data and demonstrate how social prescribing can address older adults' well being.

The Social Prescribing initiative enables a community to hire a part-time Community Connector to connect an older person, perhaps secluded at home because of a lack of mobility, confused by technology, newly widowed and grieving, or unable to access available services within their area, to needed services. The Community Connector accepts referrals from health professionals or community organizations that identify an older adult who may be isolated or disconnected or simply unable to link with the best kind of support from non-clinical resources. Self-referrals are also accepted. Of course, we need skilled medical professionals to diagnose and treat us, but the medicine available – a pill or a treatment or further investigation – may not be the complete solution.

Research has told us that one of the key ingredients of health and well-being is being connected to others

who care about us, "know us". This is a social determinant of health. Loneliness and isolation or simply not knowing about resources can hide underneath physical symptoms.

Addressing that disconnection can often play an important role in enhancing the effectiveness of medical treatment. Connecting patients to social networks and community services can be a key to improving their situation and enabling them to remain independent and living in the place they choose.



Remember Norm from the sit-com Cheers? Each time he walked into the bar, people looked up and called out his name in greeting! Norm belonged and everyone knew his name. A community connector can help a senior link up to services and other people – everything from figuring out the recycling rules to joining a seniors' social club to getting a housekeeper to help them do their laundry and make a few meals can make a positive difference.

Perhaps not everybody, but a few more people can "know your name" and enable you to stay healthy in the community where you want to live.

This edition of Gray Matters shares real life examples of how a community connector has assisted a client in linking up with community resources and getting practical assistance. At SSM we believe Social Prescribing is a valuable tool for older adults to live well as part of a community, supported how and where they want to live.

Shan Landry

Did You Know:

SSM has produced a new video, Social Prescribing – in Action, that will be available on our website in the New Year: www.skseniorsmechanism.ca



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SSM

Older Adults Moving Forward

SSM is an umbrella organization that brings together groups of older adults who offer their wealth of experience, knowledge and time to work together in the interest of seniors in Saskatchewan. From a wide range of backgrounds, these groups work selflessly to better the life of older adults, whether advocating about issues of interest to seniors, providing specific types of programming, or sharing information to benefit seniors in our province.

SSM Member Organizations:

Canada Post Heritage Club - Golden Sheaf Chapter
C.A.R.P. Saskatchewan
Moose Jaw & District Seniors Association
National Association of Federal Retirees
Power Pioneers Association of Saskatchewan Inc.
Regina 55+ Community Centre
Saskatchewan Union Retirees Federation
Saskatchewan Retirees Association
Saskatchewan Seniors Association Inc.
Saskatchewan Senior Fitness Association
Saskatoon Council on Aging
Saskatoon Services for Seniors
SaskTel Pioneers Chapter 59
Senior Power
Seniors' University Group
Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan
Vitalité 55+ Saskatchewan
Women of the Dawn

Supporters of SSM:

Association of Personal Care Home Operators in SK
Eden Care Communities, Regina
Hafford/Blaine Lake Health Advisory Network
Prince Albert Seniors Advocacy Centre
Saskatchewan Association of Nurse Practitioners
Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities
College of Registered Nurses of Saskatchewan

Partner:

Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association

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All editorial matter published in Gray Matters represents the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of SSM. Statements and opinions expressed do not represent the official policy of SSM unless so stated.

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Seniors Working Together



1 + 1 = 3:

THE SYNERGY OF AGE-FRIENDLY AND SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

The Oxford Dictionary defines synergy as ‘the interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects’.

SSM has witnessed this synergistic effect in communities where both Age-Friendly and Social Prescribing are active. Age-Friendly communities participating in the provincial Social Prescribing initiative include Shaunavon, Moose Jaw, Regina, Saskatoon, Yorkton, and Candle Lake. As both programs continue to grow, there is interest in establishing both initiatives in tandem where neither has existed previously, as people begin to see the fit and the positive results of both.

Age-Friendly and Social Prescribing each have distinct features and purposes, but there is a strong, complementary fit, as both aim to improve the health and well-being of older adults by addressing non-medical social determinants of health. Social prescribing serves as a practical, person-centered tool to implement community-level changes advocated by the Age-Friendly movement.

How They Intersect:

Age-Friendly views community needs through the lens of older adults in eight domains or areas of community: housing, social participation, respect &

social inclusion, civic participation & employment, communication & information, community support & health services, outdoor spaces & buildings, and transportation. These domains closely mirror the social determinants of health that social prescribing can address. Both initiatives recognize that health is influenced by factors beyond medical treatment, such as social connections, housing, and physical activity. Social prescribing directly addresses these by linking individuals to community resources that help with issues like loneliness, social isolation, and access to practical services. Often, these resources have been identified or developed through Age-Friendly initiatives.

Holistic, Person-Centred Approach:

Social prescribing is inherently holistic and person-centred. Community Connectors listen to an individual’s unique story and help them create a plan tailored to their specific needs and interests. Age-Friendly programs, services, and policies are driven directly by the perspectives of older adults in the community, with older adults leading the process and providing ongoing input.

Community Connection and Belonging:

Age-Friendly communities aim to be inclusive places where all people can live and thrive. Specifically, the social participation and respect & social inclusion domains of Age-Friendly help communities create a

place where people of all ages are valued, included, and supported. Social prescribing helps facilitate this by connecting older adults to social groups, activity classes (e.g., walking, gardening), and volunteering opportunities, which boosts their social connections and sense of belonging. One service that many Age-Friendly communities have provided is the creation of community resource directories that highlight all the available programs and services in the community, which inform the Community Connector and their clients about activities or services of interest.

Reducing Healthcare Burden:

Age-Friendly communities focus on promoting healthy, safe, and accessible communities for people of all ages. Both approaches seek to help older adults live well and age safely in their homes, helping reduce the need for frequent medical appointments and emergency admissions, thus alleviating pressure on the formal healthcare system.

Practical Implementation:

Milestones in the development of an Age-Friendly community include assessment of community need through community surveys and input, followed by thoughtful planning to address identified gaps. Resulting programs, policies and services provide community support that social prescribing clients can benefit from. Social prescribing provides a concrete mechanism to connect individuals to the services that exist (or highlight gaps where services are needed) within that Age-Friendly environment. Gaps identified through social prescribing can be considered by Age-Friendly committees in further assessment of community needs.

Example of Collaboration:

Community Resource Directories have been developed by many Age-Friendly committees. This tool assists Community Connectors in locating

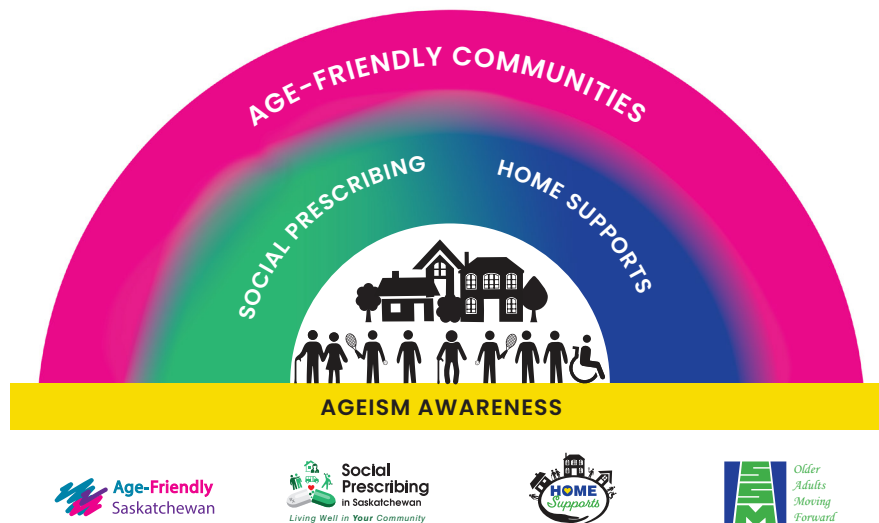
services for their social prescribing clients. Volunteer transportation services implemented by some Age-Friendly communities provide improved access to services and programs for social prescribing clients who may otherwise be isolated from social activities, or have difficulty accessing food, health care, or other social services.

Age-Friendly committees have focused on addressing the domain of social participation, particularly in response to the pandemic years. Exercise programs, community meals, and intergenerational interaction through Tech Time sessions led by teens or Reading Buddy programs that pair older adults with elementary school students have been highly successful. Opportunities to exchange ideas through book clubs or educational presentations and to create together through art classes or gardening projects are just some of the ways that Age-Friendly communities are bringing people together. Connecting social prescribing clients to these types of activities alleviates loneliness and provides interaction and informal support systems, outside of the medical system.

A new graphic produced by SSM (left) provides a visual representation of the overarching nature of an Age-Friendly Community that can create the supportive environment where older adults can age well. Age-Friendly collaborates with Social Prescribing and Home Supports initiatives to create synergy for success.

An Age-Friendly community provides the environment and resources, and social prescribing provides the personalized connection pathway to those resources, creating a synergistic relationship that supports healthy aging and well-being for older adults. Better Together.

– Wendy Thienes,
Age-Friendly Saskatchewan Staff





FACILITATING INDEPENDENCE:

Support to Age Well at Home



Growing Together: How Age Friendly Moose Jaw Is Building Independence, Connection, and Community

In 2023, the Moose Jaw Age Friendly Committee asked older adults across the community a simple but meaningful question: What do you need to age well here in Moose Jaw? The responses were clear and consistent. Seniors wanted more opportunities for purposeful programming—spaces to connect, learn, and engage. They also emphasized transportation as an ongoing barrier, especially when it came to accessing appointments, activities, or services confidently and affordably.

In 2025 these priorities pointed the committee toward two actionable paths: explore new transportation options and strengthen programming. With support from the Facilitating Independence Grant, the committee hired two facilitators who spent the past several months diving deeply into these areas, helping transform community feedback into practical, local solutions.

The first facilitator focused on the transportation challenge—an issue that affects independence,

health, and social connectedness. Rather than guessing what might help, the committee launched a transportation pilot study exploring two promising models in partnership with Saskatchewan-based service providers.

The Car Share model, developed in partnership with the Regina Car Share Cooperative, was shaped with a unique Moose Jaw lens. Instead of focusing solely on individual seniors borrowing vehicles, the pilot is exploring whether shared-access vehicles could support older adult-serving organizations such as the Moose Jaw & District Seniors Association, the Moose Jaw Multicultural Council, and the New Southern Plains Métis Local 160. These organizations regularly support clients and members who need transportation—for out-of-town medical trips, community programming, or essential errands. Having a shared vehicle available could enable volunteer drivers to help without relying on personal cars, reduce costs for agencies, and provide more consistent support for older adults.

By contrast, the Ride Share model, piloted through a partnership with Booker Rides, focuses on simplifying everyday local mobility. Whether

an older adult needs a ride to a senior's centre, SARCAN, a community class, or a nearby appointment, the ride share system offers a flexible and accessible option. The goal is to provide easy, affordable, and reliable bookings—supporting seniors who may not require out-of-town travel but still need dependable transportation within the city. One ride share participant described her experience as such:

“Excellent program for seniors who are unable to drive or do not have access to a vehicle. The drivers are friendly, reliable, and very accommodating picking you up right at your door, taking you to your appointment, and bringing you back home afterward. The service is consistently friendly, thoughtful, and efficient. From a frequent user/rider of the program” - Bev P.

While the transportation pilot began answering one major need, the second facilitator turned to the other: programming. Through a comprehensive community scan—interviews, site visits, program reviews, and conversations with older adults—the facilitator mapped the strengths and gaps in Moose Jaw's older adult

programming landscape. Many organizations were already offering valuable programs and were eager to strengthen engagement and tailor offerings more closely to seniors' interests.

A desire for more intergenerational programming emerged as a common desire of many participants. Older adults wanted opportunities to connect with youth in meaningful ways—through skills, stories, mentorship, creativity, and shared learning. With this insight, the facilitator helped build partnerships between the Moose Jaw & District Seniors Association and both the public and Catholic school divisions. These partnerships are beginning to shape intergenerational initiatives that bring students and seniors together in ways that are enriching for both.

What began with a survey in 2023 has grown into a coordinated and hopeful effort to build a more connected and supportive community for Moose Jaw's older adults. With the help of the Facilitating Independence Grant, Age Friendly Moose Jaw is turning feedback into action—and action into meaningful, lasting change.

GRANTS for Facilitating Independence

The Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism (SSM), in partnership with the Government of Saskatchewan's Ministry of Health, will once again be providing one-time grant funding to senior-serving organizations and communities in Saskatchewan. This funding supports projects that enable older adults to remain independent and continue living safely and comfortably in their own homes and communities.

This initiative recognizes that aging well at home requires more than basic services—it relies on strong, connected, communities. Projects supported through Facilitating Independence Grants (FIG) emphasize the importance of building community support systems that enhance quality of life. These efforts may include maintaining and improving health and wellness, ensuring access to safe and reliable transportation, supporting appropriate and accessible housing options, and creating opportunities for social participation and inclusion. Equally vital is effective communication—ensuring that older adults can access information in a clear manner, regardless of their preferred format or technology skills.

The overall goal of FIG is to fund initiatives that provide meaningful programs with supports, and options, that empower older adults to live a freely chosen, purposeful life within their communities.

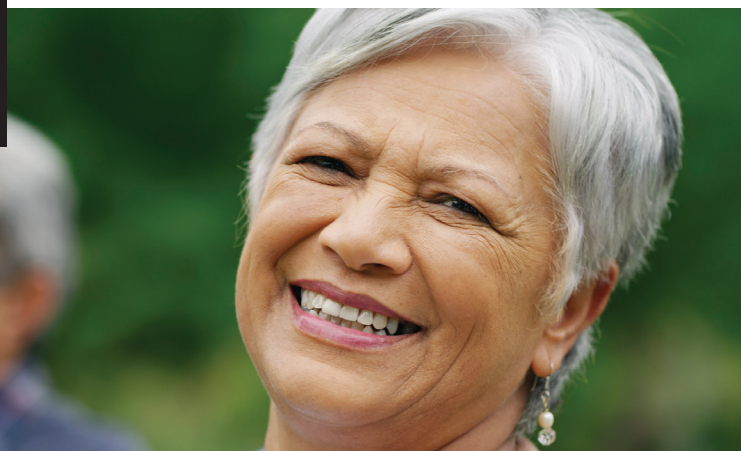
More information about FIG is available on the SSM Website – including eligibility criteria, application procedures, and key timelines. Additional inquiries may be directed to programs@skseniorsmechanism.ca.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

SCOA

A Piece of the Puzzle:

Working Together to Support Older Adults in Saskatchewan



The Saskatoon Council on Aging (SCOA) is a non-profit, charitable organization that has been supporting older adults in Saskatoon and surrounding areas since 1991. In 2026, we are proud to celebrate our 35th anniversary. Our Mission is to promote the dignity, health and independence of older adults through education, programs, services and policy advocacy, and our Vision is positive aging for all in an age-friendly community.

Every day, we see the value of organizations working together. Older adults have diverse needs, and no single program can meet them all. This is why being an active member of the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism (SSM) is important. Across the province, SSM member agencies provide recreation, cultural programming, health promotion, transportation, education, outreach and volunteer opportunities. Each organization contributes a unique piece of the larger picture. When these pieces fit together, they create a stronger network of support for older adults throughout Saskatchewan.

SCOA contributes to this network in several ways. We publish the Directory of Services and Social Activities, a comprehensive guide to programs and resources in Saskatoon. Our lifelong learning programs offer opportunities to explore topics such as technology, health, estate planning and the arts. Our neighbourhood Hub Clubs support social connection, workshops and informal activities close to home. For caregivers, SCOA operates the Caregiver Information and Support Centre, offering guidance, education and access to resources, and we provide a toll-free Caregiver Information Line at 1-888-652-4411. SCOA also hosts major events such as Spotlight on Seniors tradeshow, which brings together service providers, community groups and older adults to learn about services and supports all in one place.

Social Prescribing is another example of how organizations collaborate to support older adults. At SCOA, we serve as the anchoring agency for Social

Prescribing in Saskatoon which has received SSM funding for a part-time Community Connector position. We are hoping to secure funding from another source to support a full-time Community Connector dedicated to helping older adults access the programs and services they need. SCOA also actively participates in the provincial Thrive at Home initiative, which includes representation from several SSM member organizations. Through these partnerships, Social Prescribing strengthens the connections between older adults and the wide range of supports available in their community.

When an older adult or caregiver is referred to Social Prescribing, the Community Connector meets with them to learn what they are looking for and helps match them with programs or services offered by SCOA or by other trusted community organizations. Social Prescribing does not replace existing programs. It helps people discover and access the ones that best fit their needs based on a person-centered and holistic approach. Many of these services come from designated age friendly organizations and communities, including SSM member organizations.

Collaboration is at the heart of SCOA's work. By sharing information and working together, we strengthen the network of supports that help older adults live well in Saskatchewan.

– Jennifer White,
Community Connector,
Social Prescribing Saskatoon

For more information:
SCOA Website: www.scoa.ca
SCOA Main Office: 306-652-2255

Caregiver Information Line:
1-888-652-4411

Community Connector,
Social Prescribing Saskatoon:
306-652-2255



The Honourable Lori Carr

*Minister of Mental Health and Addictions,
Seniors and Rural and Remote Health*



In Saskatchewan, our government is listening to patients of all ages and putting your needs first. We are expanding access to care across the province by enabling health professionals to fully use their training and expertise.

Pharmacists can now treat more than 30 common ailments like sinus infections or migraines.

Many Saskatchewan pharmacists in rural and urban communities can also test and prescribe for strep throat and ear infections.

In partnership with the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals, the Government of Saskatchewan launched a pilot project in January 2025, allowing participating pharmacists to conduct testing for strep throat and assess for ear infections. In November, we expanded strep testing in multiple communities across the province to give more patients faster, easier access to care – particularly in rural and remote communities.

More **nurse practitioners** are providing primary care to patients across the province, ordering tests, diagnosing, and treating everyday conditions.

This fall, we signed 19 nurse practitioners to contracts to provide publicly funded primary care services, and 16 of these began providing services as of November 1. This number is expected to increase over the coming months with up to 30 contracts available.

This initiative, developed in partnership with the Saskatchewan Association of Nurse Practitioners, is part of a broader strategy to ensure that everyone in Saskatchewan has access to a primary care provider by the end of 2028.

Optometrists can now offer publicly funded glaucoma care, expanding services to communities.

In October 2025, the Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Saskatchewan Association of Optometrists, launched a two-year Glaucoma Care Pilot Program.

This initiative expands publicly funded glaucoma services to include care provided by licensed optometrists. It also reduces barriers for patients in rural and remote areas by making care available closer to home, limiting the need to travel long distances to see an ophthalmologist.

Our government is working hard to deliver practical solutions in health care, providing more options and more access, for everyone.

As Minister of Seniors, I am dedicated to addressing your needs, concerns and suggestions. Please feel free to email my office at ministerrhe@gov.sk.ca, phone 306-798-9014 or send me a letter at:

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Thrive at Home: A Bridge to Better Aging

Meet Elena – avid gardener, Thursday-night bridge enthusiast, and proud grandmother. Three years after losing her husband, she’s rebuilt a life filled with purpose and connection.

But lately, things have changed. What began as a dull ache in her knee has grown into constant, grinding pain. Osteoarthritis is stealing pieces of her independence. She avoids the stairs. Her gardening gloves sit untouched. When her grandson asks her to play tag around the kitchen island, she forces a smile and says, “Maybe next time.” Privately, she wonders: Will I ever get back to the life I love?

Then one afternoon, the phone rings.

It’s Margaret – her Thursday bridge partner – calling to sort out who’s hosting this week. Hearing the strain in Elena’s voice, she gently asks what’s going on. As Elena opens up, Margaret listens and decides to help.

That evening, she hops online and searches 211 Saskatchewan to see what supports exist in their community. Within days, she has arranged volunteer ride-share transportation so Elena can get to her medical appointments. She also registers Elena for the Friendly Calls program, so she won’t feel isolated while she takes time away from card night.

Without realizing it, Margaret has stepped into the role of a community connector – someone who helps people navigate not only the healthcare system, but the social and community supports that shape overall well-being.

Elena’s story is far from unique. Across Saskatchewan, older adults often face challenges not because supports don’t exist, but because they don’t know where to look or don’t have someone to guide them. That’s where social prescribing comes in.

Social prescribing helps bridge the gap between clinical care and community support. Rather than treating symptoms alone, it connects people to non-clinical services like transportation, social programs, physical activity groups, and community health resources.

In practice, it looks a lot like what Margaret did: listening, identifying what’s getting in the way, and offering a warm hand-off to the right community support.

At the Saskatchewan Health Quality Council, we see an opportunity to strengthen and formalize this kind of support across the province. As a trusted ally in analytics and evaluation, we’ve partnered with the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism to support the evaluation of social prescribing pilots in up to 12 local communities.

Moreover, we launched Thrive at Home, a network where community, social, and health partners can learn from one another, share innovations, and explore new ways of collaborating. Together, we are building a system where more people like Elena can stay connected to the lives they love, and more neighbours like Margaret have the tools to help.

To celebrate our collective efforts so far, we’re hosting the Thrive at Home Showcase on March 5 at TCU Place in Saskatoon. André Picard, award-winning national health writer, will headline this energizing event, sharing insight into harnessing the power of grassroots leadership and cross-sector collaboration to transform our system to one that supports the health and well-being of older adults.

If you’re interested in getting involved in the Thrive at Home Action Community, reach out to Chris Plishka at cplishka@hqc.sk.ca to learn more!

– Chelsea Schwartz,
Program Director,
Saskatchewan Health Quality Council



Social Prescribing where we are, and where we are going

This has been an exciting year for those of us working on the Social Prescribing initiative here in Saskatchewan. Where do we start?

We have the following communities and the areas they serve delivering social prescribing programs within their communities to older adults 55+ :
Shaunavon, Moose Jaw, Resort Village of Candle Lake, Yorkton, Regina and Saskatoon. These communities have stepped forward and shown that they want to see what is best for older adults in their community, allowing the individual to be able to make their own choice as to where and how they wish to continue to live. A healthy community can be a happy community for all.



The Community Connectors in those communities have been busy introducing themselves to the service agencies and programs that are well placed to provide some of the resources for the needs that individual older adults have.

It was a slow start for the community connectors, as relationships had to be developed. Those living in the respective communities needed to be aware of what social prescribing was and who they could contact if they were unable to identify a resource in the community that would address the concern they had about their well-being. The agencies and programs needed to be aware of the service that could be delivered and what social prescribing is and how it might work in their community and surrounding area.



As the word got out about social prescribing, we identified that the list of those we had originally thought would be referrers (physicians, primary health care nurses and Home Care staff), was too small and we revised who would be considered a referrer. The Community Connectors are accepting referrals from other health care professionals, pharmacists, first responders (Fire and Police), paramedics, community organizations and self referrals.

Self referrals may be accepted from those individuals who identify themselves to the connectors as being in need of non-medical services and are not aware of the services that may be available to them. In some cases where an older adult is receiving medical attention and will return home shortly, their caregivers who may be family members over the age of 55 may also need to connect with the connector to identify other services or programs that their family member may require.

New locations are in the process of identifying community roles in becoming part of the Social Prescribing initiative. Most recent is the Town of Nipawin with three other locations throughout the province planning to be up and running by the beginning of February once all the parties have identified their roles in the communities.

On another item related to Social Prescribing, we should have a second video up and running on the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism website in the not-too-distant future. The video will identify the effectiveness and benefits of social prescribing not only for the individual but also the community. Stay tuned.

— Rod
McKendrick,
Social
Prescribing
Co-ordinator





Social prescribing pilot helps seniors thrive at home

Shaunavon was the first community to join SSM's Social Prescribing Initiative early in 2024. Tracy McConnell is the Community Connector serving Shaunavon & area residents. Tracy's client, Tony, shared his experience as a Social Prescribing client.

"The quality of the people in Saskatchewan and, specifically, the quality of people in this town, is quite remarkable." Tony Ayoub speaks unabashedly about his feelings for the community of Shaunavon which he has called home for the past twelve years. Tony was born and raised overseas and has lived in many places around the world including Prince George, British Columbia, prior to his move to the prairies. Tony admits that with age, some health issues are inevitable, but he is grateful for a supportive community that is helping him to age in place.

Tony elaborates by saying, "It's not just safe here, but helpful. If I need something I can ask and it's forthcoming." With the encouragement and help of hospital staff, Tony applied for and received a scooter through Telemiracle which has improved his quality of life. He says, "I didn't actually ask for the scooter; staff at the hospital encouraged me to put in for it. The whole town is the same as that. Now, everyday I go out for the mail to get fresh air. I'm very grateful."

Tony says he does have Home Care services which are helping to meet his medical needs. A heart condition affected his mobility and he spent three years in a wheelchair. "Now I'm walking again, independently since last year!"

Tracy, in her Community Connector role, introduced Tony to the Shaunavon Food Bank, and to Age-Friendly Shaunavon who helped him to find new clothing and winter attire.

"I go to the Food Bank. It's amazing. I've never been to any other food bank. They're very supportive. I didn't know that it existed," says Tony.

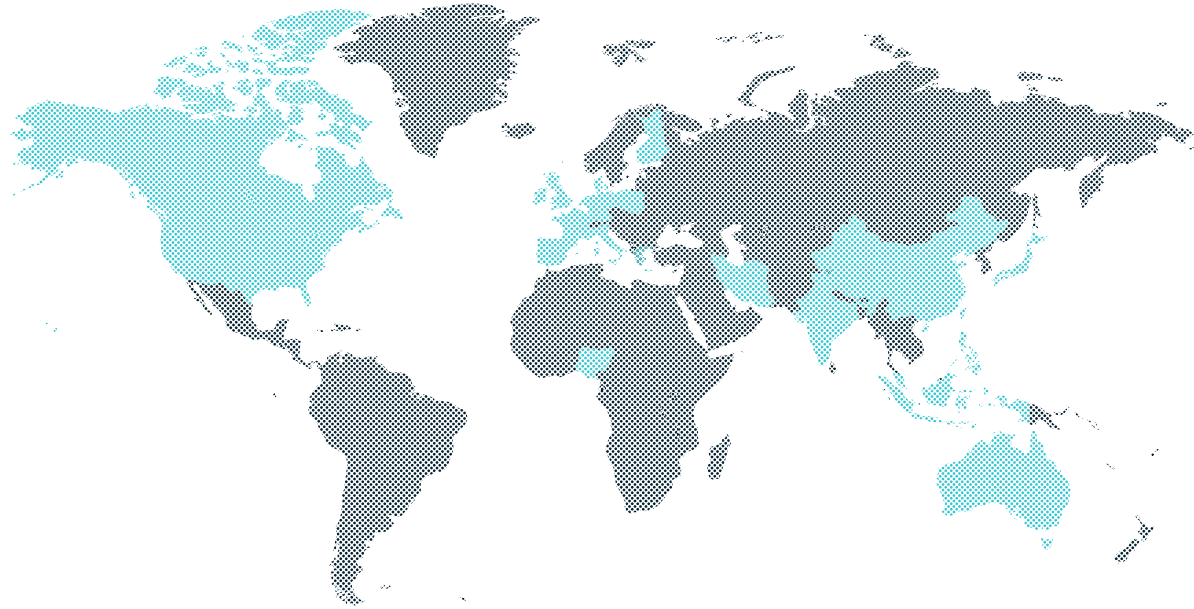
Tracy says, "I took him two times (to the Food Bank) and then we introduced him to the Courtesy Van, so now he can go on his own." Fostering independence through the social prescribing model is one of the goals. Shaunavon's Courtesy Van has been an essential service in the community for over 30 years. Tony says, "I don't know if there is a Courtesy Van in other towns, but that speaks to Shaunavon. You don't see that in every town."

He adds, "Tracy is really keyed into a lot of stuff in this town and she gives you access to a lot of information that you might find for yourself, but you might not. It really is helpful. The support has been never-ending. She tries to chase me out of here. She succeeds, occasionally," he says with a wink and a laugh. He adds, "Tracy's friendly and we banter back and forth. She's not just somebody who checks on me; she's a friend."

Tony emphasizes the importance of community support, saying, "Everybody here puts their best foot forward. There's nothing you can't ask for help with and there's nothing that's not provided. There's a level of security that isn't even talked about, but it's the unseen part of that. You know you're not alone."

– Wendy Thienes,
Shaunavon Social Prescribing Steering Committee

Social Prescribing Around the World



England
Scotland
Wales
Northern Ireland
Republic of Ireland
Canada
USA
Portugal

Spain
Netherlands
Finland
Italy
Germany
Austria
Poland
India

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Community Connectors' Reflections

Small & familiar setting strategies for community reach

"Smaller group info [session] nights worked better. People felt free to ask questions"

"The open Discovery Meeting was fantastic"

Referral notes do not match client needs

"The referral from the physician seemed inappropriate..."

"The NP and GP recognize that their patient needs 'help', but the direction... doesn't coincide with the referral note"

Deep roots & familiarity improve access to SP

"The referrals I have received are people that I have known for many years which makes the whole process easy as they are comfortable with me entering the home for the intake process."

Acting as healthcare navigators

"My role so far has not just been to connect to activities... it has been to health services."

"The clients appear to need more than just resources for activity and recreation."

"Their mental and physical health needs to be addressed in order for them to feel well enough to consider a social event."

Acting as home supports coordinators

"Picking up the clients to take grocery shopping... the majority of these clients just want the socialization."

Acting as community developers to overcome system barriers

"Transportation is very often a barrier."

"Provided transportation information... but could not provide free transport."

Doing a scan of the community has helped... it is easier to go in person... as there was poor response [to emails/calls]."

"Getting a phone number and accessing the resource can be limiting."



Top left to right: Jan Cochrane (CC in Yorkton); Suelen M. Góes (HQC Researcher, Evaluation team)

Bottom left to right: Amy Wingate (CC in Candle Lake); Robbi Gamble (CC in Moose Jaw)



Celebrating Seniors

AWARD NOMINEES 2025

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP – URBAN



BRIAN HEINZ
SASKATOON



NEALE PARTINGTON
REGINA



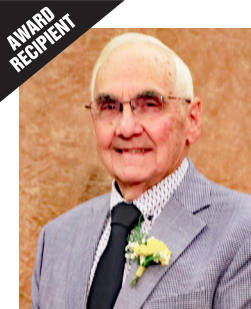
TRACY DESJARLAIS
EDENWOLD

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP FIRST NATIONS OR MÉTIS

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP – RURAL



COLETTE FISCHER
ABERDEEN



GENE KESSLER
PANGMAN



TERRY AND GLORIA
OVANS – KIPLING



JOAN WALLMAN
NOKOMIS



MARIE YANKE
CHURCHBRIDGE

ADVOCACY



RODNEY DICKENSON
FOAM LAKE



SENIORS UNIVERSITY GROUP ELDER
ABUSE INSTRUCTORS – REGINA



SHEILA FAHMAN
REGINA

It is with pride that SSM recognizes each of the nominees in the following categories. Each nominee is outstanding and deserving of an award. Their dedication has impacted communities all across Saskatchewan. Thank you to those who took the time to nominate these exceptional senior volunteers!

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WAPELLA**

WELL-BEING



**NANCY MCCANN
REGINA**

AWARD
RECIPIENT



**LORRAINE THIBEAULT
SHELLBROOK**

INTERGENERATIONAL

AWARD
RECIPIENT



**INDIGENOUS GRANDMOTHERS
SUPPORT NETWORK – REGINA**

BLOOMING PERENNIAL

AWARD
RECIPIENT



**ADELINE FOSSEY
SHELLBROOK**



**STAN NOVICKI
HAFFORD**

AWARD
RECIPIENT



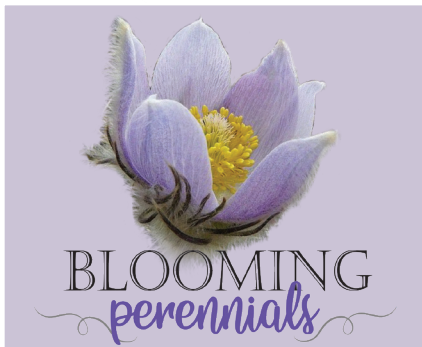
**JOHN & PATRICIA MARTIN
HAGUE**

EDUCATION

AWARD
RECIPIENT



**SHEILA HAMEL
CUT KNIFE**



Jan Cochrane



Asking to write about being a “Blooming Perennial” gave me the opportunity to reflect on my past and what aging is to me. As with many people, I find myself in a 71-year-old body but with the energy and curiosity of a 40-year-old brain. I don’t see myself as ‘old’—just seasoned, still learning, and still very much alive to possibility. I am like Phyllis Diller. “I don’t know how you feel about old age, but in my case, I didn’t even see it coming. It hit me from the rear”.

I was fortunate to have jobs I truly enjoyed, and unlike some of my friends, I never found myself counting down the months, days, or minutes until retirement. When we moved three years ago to be closer to grandchildren, I retired. I thought that retirement meant finally having time for the important stuff—spoiling the grandkids, volunteering for organizations, baking enough cookies to qualify as a small business, and traveling anywhere that doesn’t require setting an alarm clock. It lasted three months. It was a loss of identity to me and a feeling that I was no longer needed for my years of experience and wisdom. It was like when you know all the answers, but nobody asks you the questions. I stayed in my pjs until noon due to lack of structure and drove my husband Roger crazy. He finally told me, “Jan, if you retire, I am going back to work”.

And so I went back to work, ending up with two hobby jobs. I am in my 51st year of nursing and guess what? I’m still loving it—proof that nursing might just be the ultimate anti-aging secret. The nice thing about being an RN are all the possibilities for different areas to work in. Now, I am a Continuing Care Aide Instructor and get to hang out with young people. My other job is a Social Prescribing Community Connector through Sask. Seniors Mechanism. My role is helping older people to address gaps and issues while being isolated at home. How fun is that! When will I officially

retire? Well, you know you are getting old when you start to look like your passport.

“My health is good; it is my age that is bad” (Roy Acuff). I have been asked why I have so much energy for my age. As a diabetes educator, I had to “walk the talk” and live a healthy lifestyle as a mentor. This means maintaining a healthy weight, being active and keeping the brain functioning.

I believe that activity is so important that I just did a campaign on “Move it Or Lose It” through Sask. Parks and Recreation. What we don’t use, we lose, whether that is body or mind. I park my car at the end of the parking lot. Ok, so another reason is so that I can find it.



*As someone once said,
“As long as you are ‘over the hill’,
you might as well enjoy the view”.*



From sunshine to snowfall:

Ways to manage mental health as the seasons change

As autumn settles in and daylight hours shrink across Canada, many people notice their mood and energy dip. While it's common to feel a bit slower in the darker months, some experience a more serious condition called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) which is a type of depression triggered by seasonal changes.

SAD can cause symptoms like sadness, low motivation, trouble concentrating, and loss of interest in activities you normally enjoy. The good news: there are proven ways to manage SAD and protect your mental health through fall and winter.

7 ways to manage Seasonal Affective Disorder

1. **Get natural light daily** – Try to spend time outside, especially in the morning. Even on cloudy days, exposure to daylight helps regulate your mood and sleep cycle.
2. **Brighten your environment** – Use bright indoor lighting or a light therapy lamp to mimic natural sunlight.
3. **Stay physically active** – Regular movement is a powerful mood booster. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days.
4. **Eat for energy** – Fuel your body with whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and omega-3-rich foods like salmon or walnuts.
5. **Keep a steady sleep routine** – Go to bed and wake up at consistent times to support your body's internal clock.
6. **Stay socially connected** – Schedule time with family or friends, join a community group, or volunteer. Connection helps reduce feelings of isolation.
7. **Reach out for help** – If symptoms persist, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional. Treatment options like therapy, medication, and light therapy can make a real difference.

And remember, you are not alone in feeling this way. Seasonal Affective Disorder is common in northern climates, and help is available. Small daily changes can make a big impact on your overall well-being.



Thank you to our Celebrating Seniors sponsors



Also Thanks to:

- Faculty of Nursing, University of Regina (Saskatoon Campus) and The People of African Descent Seniors Association
- SaskEnergy
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Having problems with a provincial, municipal or health services in Saskatchewan? **Maybe we can help.**

If you have tried to resolve the issue, but think the result is unfair, contact us. We may be able to help resolve the problem informally or by investigating and making recommendations when appropriate.

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* See clinic for full details.

Social prescribing in Saskatchewan: Health beyond the doctor's office



Health is more than prescriptions and appointments. It is shaped by where we live, work and age, and by the connections we make along the way. These non-medical factors, called the social determinants of health, include income, housing, education, food security and social support. When these needs are unmet, stress and isolation can lead to chronic illness.



WHAT IS SOCIAL PRESCRIBING?

Social prescribing bridges the gap between clinical care and community life. Instead of only offering medication, health professionals refer individuals to programs that enhance well-being, such as walking groups, volunteer opportunities, arts workshops, or home support services. These connections reduce loneliness, build confidence and help people age well in familiar surroundings.

SASKATCHEWAN SUCCESS STORIES

Across the province, social prescribing is gaining momentum. In Shaunavon, the Community Connector program supported by the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism links older adults to practical supports like scooters, home cleaning and volunteer outings. One participant, Tony Ayoub, regained independence through simple services such as mail runs and neighbourhood visits.

In Regina, a provincially-funded initiative allows doctors to refer patients to partners like Age-Friendly Regina. These referrals have led to fewer hospital visits and improved quality of life. Meanwhile, in Prince Albert, their program takes a personalized approach, co-designing plans with individuals and families to ensure access to food, housing and social activities.

WHY IT MATTERS

Research shows that up to 80 percent of health outcomes are influenced by social factors. Communities that assess service gaps and take action see measurable benefits, like fewer emergency calls, reduced clinic visits and stronger social ties. National studies confirm that social bonds can halve dementia risk, cut heart disease and stroke by 30 percent and boost survival by 50 percent.



MAKING AN IMPACT

At Saskatchewan Blue Cross, we believe health starts with connection. Through our Community Investment Program, we support initiatives that foster social engagement and Health Literacy. These partnerships help individuals access high-quality non-clinical services and build resilience for the future.

Social prescribing is more than a healthcare trend. It's a lifeline for seniors in Saskatchewan. By linking people to resources and relationships, we can create communities where aging at home is not only possible but supported. **Health is not just about treatment – it's about belonging.**

Stay tuned throughout 2026 as we feature different areas of Health Literacy.

We hope to come along with you as you build your personal Health Literacy toolkit. Visit us online at www.sk.bluecross.ca/healthysk to learn more.

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Ask Auntie Ageism



Dear Auntie,

I am writing to you about my cousin, Roscoe.

We grew up together in a small town and were close. Ros became an elevator agent and was one of the best athletes in the town – softball, curling, and hockey. He had a bad fall in the elevator and injured his back and shoulder. Then the elevator was closed. He does get a good pension from the company. His dog, Scout, a terrier/chihuahua mix, is his best friend.

I now live a couple of hours away, so I don't see Ros as much. Last week I went home and spent a weekend with Ros. Now I am worried.

Ros is about 4 or 5 years older than I am – so about 77 or 78. I don't know his exact age because he never says it out loud, even at birthdays. His wife died 4 years ago and he lives in their bungalow. Ros told me not to expect him to cook me any fancy meals. There is a small grocery store that sells some prepared and frozen meals. We drove twice to the restaurant in a bigger town and enjoyed it. I noticed that Ros really tucked into the prime rib on Sunday!

What I know about Ros' life now:

- *His back bothers him and he gets sciatica. He can walk but doesn't like to use a cane. Guys have tried to include him at the rink and diamond but he won't join. He won't use a stick for curling and he doesn't want to play Seniors Fitness softball "because that's what old seniors have to do".*
- *His house isn't too big, but it's becoming a bit messy. I cleaned the bathroom (secretly). I followed a smell and found rotten green stuff in the back of the fridge.*
- *Roscoe is becoming irascible. He doesn't want visitors. He was so angry that I almost had to leave after I suggested a cleaner could come in to help with the cleaning and cooking. "You think I want gossip around the town about what a useless old fart I am?"*

He doesn't seem to understand that I am almost as old as he is and have my own aging limitations, but I am willing to have help when I need it. What do you think is going on? How can I help him?!

Wilfred

Dear Wilfred,

You are seeing the effects of the most dangerous form of ageism – severe internalized ageism. Roscoe hates being old and that is exacerbated by ableism. He loved life as an active respected man, but deep down he feels that because he is older now, he is indeed useless.

How to help?

- Communication – can you keep more closely in touch with Ros? Does he have a computer? Maybe you could arrange Zoom conversations with him? A lot of people learned to do that during Covid times and really like it now. Phone calls are a good way to talk and sometimes not seeing one another enables more difficult words to be said.
- Is there another friend or two that you know from the town who would try to help with his isolation – maybe a regular restaurant meal at least once a week.
- Do you have any shared interests that use the brain more than the body? Maybe you could enjoy something other than sports – and maybe other old athletes from the town could be interested.

Most importantly, you could give him information on ageism and how it affects one's health and well-being. There are many sources on the web. You could start with some basic information from the SSM website. www.skseniorsmechanism.ca/ageism-awareness

— Auntie Ageism

Auntie Ageism highlights how anti-ageism critiques and challenges the ageist attitudes that are prevalent but often unrecognised in our society. Let's ALL do our part to challenge ageism.

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Century Club Corner



RICH or Poor?

Although Social Prescribing had not been heard of years ago, Edwin Ritz knew that many things came together to make a happy, healthy life. He said,

I've been asked whether I consider my life rich or poor.

According to Webster, to fully appreciate the world around us, our senses have to be fully alert – sight, hearing, taste, touch and smell. Having lived on a farm all my life (except for the last ten years), I feel I grew up and lived where all my senses came into play – possibly not daily, but according to timing – example, the four seasons. Let's examine these situations.

Sight

We farmed in a flat area of our world. On a clear day, in any season, from our farm I could count 21 elevators (this prior to their destruction). Our view was almost limitless. In harvest time, on a clear night, we were encircled with the lights of other harvesters. These lights blended with the trillions of stars that formed an umbrella over us, so one could barely distinguish where earth and sky met. There were also

incredible northern lights that entertained us with their brilliance and movement. I've always loved the formations of clouds as they, too, provide beauty. Our unbelievable sunrises and sunsets are sometimes breathtaking.

Hearing

We have all been thrilled with the call of ducks and geese, especially the first arrivals, as they wing their way northward. We delight in the song of the meadowlark and all other birds and insects, with their distinctive song or chirp. Even the lowly cricket's sound and the whistle of the stately gopher make us realize there's so much life around us.

Taste

Is there anything that can match the taste of fresh produce from the garden – peas, carrots, potatoes, corn – yes, stores can advertise fresh vegetables, but they may be days old before they are put on the shelf for sale and display. This doesn't just apply to the farm but to anyone who grows a garden.

Smell

I always loved the smell of freshly turned soil, especially those first few rounds in the field in the spring as we seeded another crop. Yes, to some it caused hay fever, but there was a distinctive smell in the air at harvest time – the smell of new-cut hay. These are odours that not everyone has the chance to partake of.

Touch

There is the touch of your loved ones, starting with your wife and partner, to children and grandchildren, as well as great-grandchildren. This touch also can apply to your friendly dog or favourite saddle horse. These, too, have been part of my life.

So, is my life rich or poor? Well, to me there is no contest. **I feel I am the richest man in the world.**



Photo of SSAI Executive Directors and Coordinators taken at SSAI Convention June 12, 2025

The Association is composed of more than 3,000 members & 85 rural seniors clubs united to form the Saskatchewan Seniors Association Inc. also known as SSAI.

SSAI - Primary Goals and Objectives:

- To bring Senior Citizens together in one strong Association that will work for the welfare of Seniors Citizens in Saskatchewan.
- To offer programs and activities that benefit Seniors.
- To work with other organizations with similar objectives.

Be part of a strong association and network with other seniors and rural seniors' clubs.

Reach beyond your own community to connect with other seniors and clubs from other parts of the province for support and new ideas.

How to get involved:

- Pay SSAI annual membership fee (\$5/person).
- Visit our website to learn more about SSAI - saskseniors.com
- Join our email list to receive updates and communication about events and opportunities.
- Join your local seniors' club; attend their meetings and events; participate in decisions.
- Have FUN! – Social interaction, fellowship, friendship, competition, entertainment, coffee, food, events, activities, prevent isolation.
- Participate in the SSAI Get Active Challenge, SSAI Bowling Tournament, and online meetings.
- Tell us about what's happening in your club, community, district, and region.
- Submit articles for our newsletter.
- Fundraising opportunities – annual raffle tickets
- Organize and attend district/regional meetings.
- Volunteer for leadership opportunities at the club, district, region, and provincial levels.
- Attend annual SSAI Convention – Save the Date: June 3-4, 2026 at Travelodge Saskatoon.

SASKATCHEWAN SENIORS ASSOCIATION INC. NEWSLETTER

Come and Enjoy the Fun!



**Saskatchewan Seniors
Association Inc.
Provincial Bowling
Tournament
April 18 - 19, 2026
at Hunter's Eastview Bowl –
huntersbowling.com
2929 Louise Street East,
Saskatoon**

Mixed Team entries – consist of 4 players

Must include minimum 1 person of opposite gender; Individual entries will also be accepted.

Schedule: All teams play 3 games each day (1 hour for each game)

***Plan to arrive early each day to get your bowling shoes and find your lane**

- **Saturday, April 18 – *Practice starts at 12:45 and tournament from 1pm – 4pm; 50/50 draw**
 - 4pm – 6pm – Free time (check into hotel, have supper on your own)
 - 6pm – 8:30pm – Evening Social & Snacks at the Ilarion Lower Lounge (2509 Louise St.)
 - Coffee, tea, & snacks, door prizes, 50/50 draw, visit & play cards
- **Sunday, April 19 – *Practice starts at 9:15am and tournament from 9:30am – 12:30pm**
 - 12:30pm – 1pm – 50/50 draw, Awards for top 3 teams & bowlers

Cost is \$200/team (\$50/person)

Register Early! Space is limited to 20 teams.

Entry Deadline: April 1, 2026

**Visit our website for more information: www.saskseniors.com
For Registrations contact Shannon – email: info@saskseniors.com**



SSAI & Connected Canadians Workshop Series



February 2026



Making Technology Work for You - When Movements Are Hard

1:00 pm CST - Thursday February 5, 2026

Learn how to adjust settings on devices so that they are more accessible to use for those with motor control challenges.



Making Technology Work for You - When Things Are Hard to Hear

1:00 pm CST - Thursday February 12, 2026

Learn how to adjust settings on devices so that they are more accessible to use for those with moderate to severe hearing loss.



Recognizing Fake News

1:00 pm CST - Thursday February 19, 2026

Learn how to be critical of what you read and see online by recognizing biased, incorrect, or unreliable information online.



Logging Out: Preparing Your Digital Life for End of Life

1:00 pm CST - Thursday February 26, 2026

Learn how to manage your digital accounts for end of life and keep your information safe.

Register via:

Toll-free phone number: 1(877) 304-5813

Email: info@connectedcanadians.ca

Form: https://bit.ly/SSAI_CC_Workshops



Funded by the
Government of Canada's
New Horizons for Seniors Program

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If you have difficulty joining the workshop series or need help with any other technical questions, call 1-877-304-5813, leave a voice message, or send an email to coordination@connectedcanadians.ca, and a coordinator will assist you shortly.

Need some help getting comfortable with technology before attending a workshop? Connected Canadians provides free digital literacy training for adults 50+. Contact them to be matched with a friendly and knowledgeable volunteer.

Whether it's learning how to use a new device, understanding online safety, or simply staying connected with loved ones, Connected Canadians technology mentors provide patient and personalized support free of charge.

Boost your confidence with a free Technology Support Session to learn Zoom or achieve other tech goals:
Call us at 1-877-304-5813 or register online
<https://www.connectedcanadians.ca/one-on-ones>



SSAI RAFFLE TICKETS

SSAI raffle fundraiser (Licence #SR25-1335) – draws to be held at convention in Saskatoon on June 4th, 2026. Tickets are \$2 each for a chance to win 1 draw of \$1000, 2 x \$500, and 5 x \$100. If you are interested in purchasing or selling raffle tickets, please contact Shannon Wright phone: 306-493-3023 email: info@saskseniors.com



ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEE - \$5/person

SSAI Membership fees can be mailed to:
Shannon Wright, Secretary/Treasurer, Box 455 Vanscoy, SK S0L 3J0
Phone: 306-493-3023 email: info@saskseniors.com
Website: saskseniors.com



Subscribe to our email list

If you would like to receive emails from SSAI, send us an email at info@saskseniors.com with your request to SUBSCRIBE. You will receive emails regarding upcoming SSAI events as well as forwarded information pertinent to Saskatchewan Seniors.

Saskatchewan Seniors Association Inc. (SSAI) would like to acknowledge the support of Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism (SSM) and the Saskatchewan Lottery Trust Fund for SSAI outreach to Seniors. Some of this funding pays for the quarterly distribution of the SSAI newsletter in Gray Matters.



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